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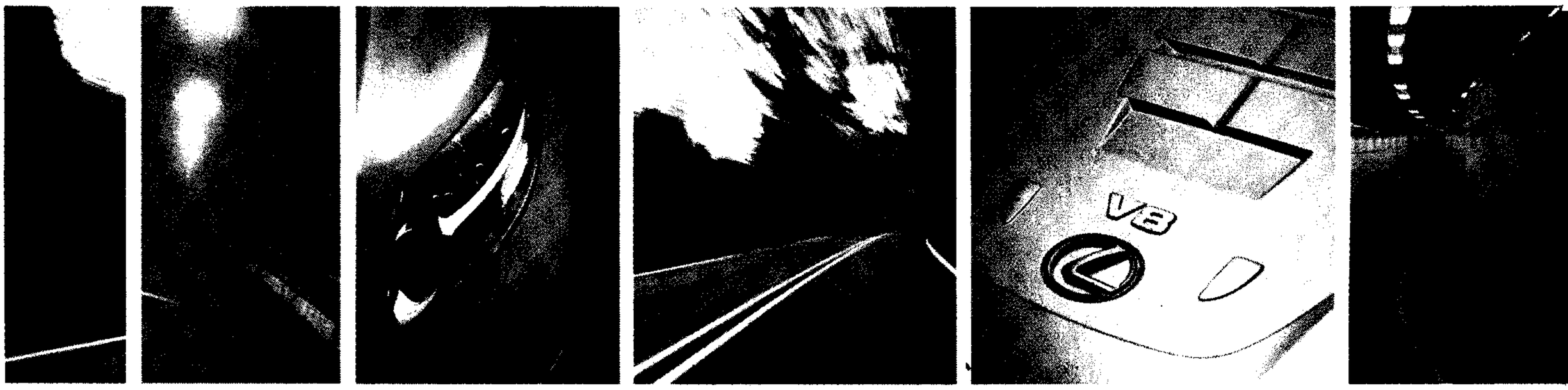

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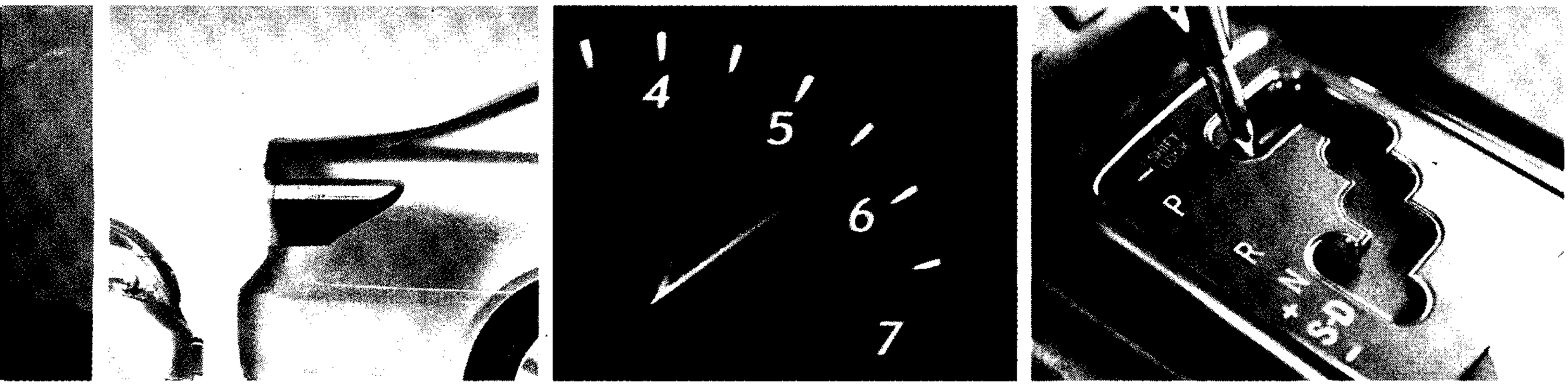

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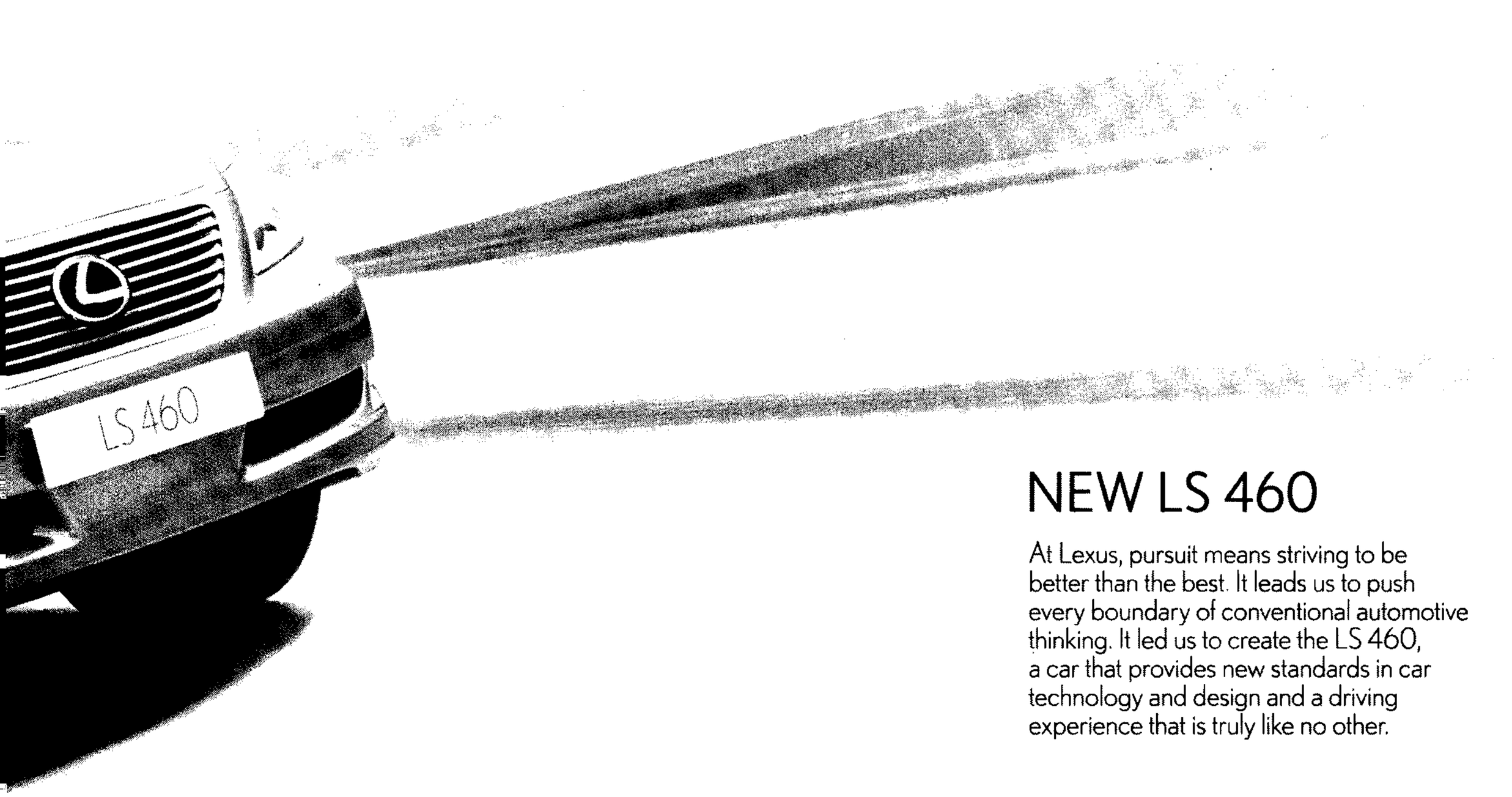

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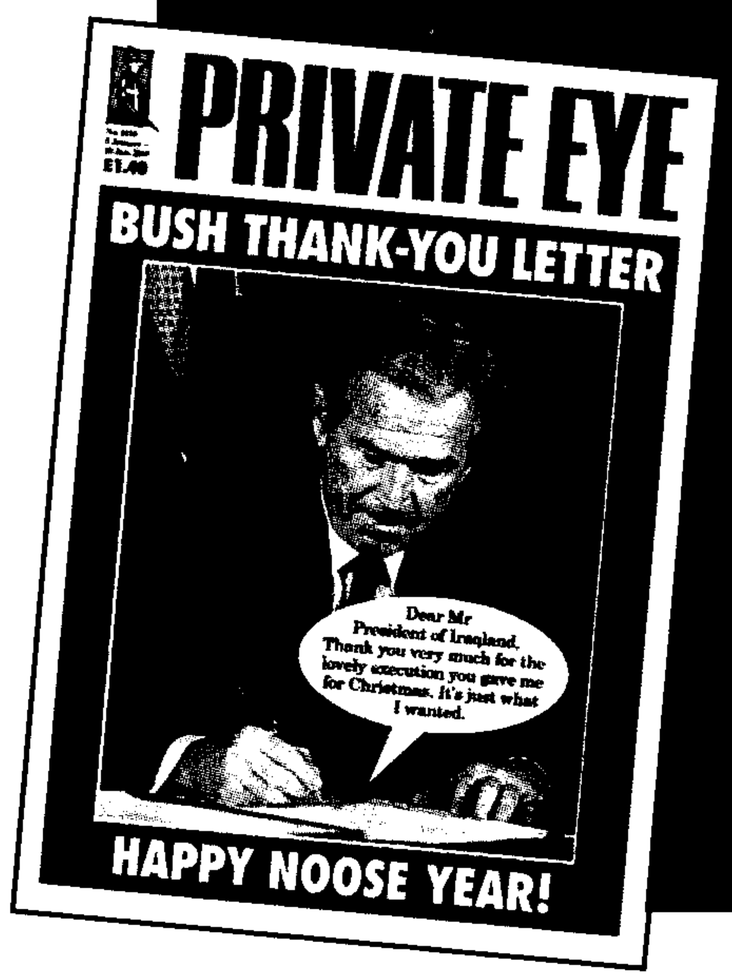
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TIMES are tough at the Home Office, which in October declined a police request for more money to get the backlog of serious convictions of British residents abroad on to its computers.

Not so tough, though, that there isn't the brass for that favourite New Labour indulgence – desirable offices for ministers and HQ. Staff moved into the newly built Marsham Street HQ in 2005 in a PFI deal officially priced at £311m, although the *Eye* has discovered it will in fact cost a total of £1.4bn.

Why such extravagance for the mandarins? Because they're worth it, as a National Audit Office report explained: "The Home Office identified a business requirement to deliver … the range and quality of facilities expected of an employer of high calibre staff."

The Home Office bosses might not be able to identify the "business requirement" to deal with criminal records – but they had no trouble spotting the urgency of offices featuring, according to the architects, "an iconic screen above the main entrance", "naturally lit atrium" "internal 'street' with shared facilities: cafés, meeting points" etc, etc.

It might not be fit for purpose, but the new Home-from-home Office is certainly built for comfort.

"Approximately 8 teas. Roughly 6 coffees. I'm afraid I don't have accurate figures for milk and sugar..."

EDITORIAL
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ABC

"So he'll lose all like the others"

ALTHOUGH the Ministry of Defence has accepted responsibility for the squalid condition of forces housing, a huge part of the problem has been the way successive governments have washed their hands of the problem.

Back in 1996 the Tories sold off forces housing to a company, Annington, owned by investment bank Nomura, then home to William Hague's mate Guy Hands and now managed by his private equity group Terra Firma. Whilst the bankers made a killing, estimated at £600m, and the National Audit Office said the taxpayer had been short-changed by £140m, the MoD remained responsible for maintaining the housing – and committed to reducing the costs of doing so as part of the package.

When pisspoor conditions persisted, in 2005 the government took the inevitable step of privatising the job. In came MODern Housing Solutions Ltd, a consortium of usual suspects Carillion, Atkins and Enterprise. If this lot are now to turn conditions round, for an appropriate profit, the MoD will have to hand over significantly more cash from shrinking budgets than has so far been forthcoming.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Gordon Brown responded to the crisis on Andrew Marr's Sunday morning BBC programme by declaring that £5bn will be spent improving military housing in the next ten years. In fact this money won't go on essential maintenance work at bases across the country but on private finance initiatives for new housing in specific locations, mostly at Colchester, Aldershot and Salisbury under contracts that will eventually cost £10.2bn. As this is non-negotiable and will have first call on future budgets it will, if anything, make doing something about dire conditions elsewhere even more difficult.

THE MoD may be reluctant to improve forces' housing, but as the last *Eye*'s revelation of the £2.3bn cost of the MoD's contract to refurbish its Whitehall HQ made clear, they don't mind throwing money at PFI projects for the pen pushers.

The department responded to BBC questions, saying that today's cost of the deal was just £748m. Not so. The figure is only reduced to this amount by removing inflation and making a further, completely spurious, 3.5 percent per annum discount. The cost even at today's prices is more like £1.5bn – more than double the cost of publicly funding the plush re-fit.

Yet again the government attempts to conceal the true cost of PFI. One day it might get rumbled.

FOR nearly two years, armed forces personnel have been waiting for the arrival of a promised childcare voucher scheme.

The MoD is supposedly committed to the scheme, which provides employees with a tax break on up to £1,000 a year from their salary to assist with childcare costs. So why are personnel still being told they will have to wait until at least the end of 2007 for their vouchers?

Once again it is the fault of the new Joint Personnel Administration system (*Eyes passim*). A Navy personnel support brief from late 2006 explains that "introduction of these schemes was delayed because they coincided with the change of personnel IT systems".

Given the numerous problems with getting the EDS-run JPA system up and running for the RAF, who knows when it will be finished rolling out to all the forces and ready to handle childcare vouchers.

PRESIDENT BUSH's new "strategy" in Iraq has made the British government's careful welcome for the Iraq Study Group report redundant.

Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett was hopeful that James Baker's recommendations for troop withdrawal and engagement with Syria and Iran would find a place in Dubya's heart. Alas, the President is instead throwing 20,000 more troops at Iraq like a losing gambler in a casino.

Beckett may offer more enthusiasm for the "soft cop" element of Bush's ploy – a £1bn reconstruction programme to lure Iraqis away from the insurgency with jobs. The new programme will be administered by the Army and involve as much Iraqi labour as possible. Previous US strategy was to hand reconstruction to US firms, a ruse Britain did not oppose, though it lobbied (with limited success) for British firms to get a slice of the pie. And British officials were very involved in the privatisation policies of Paul Bremer, the second US viceroy in Iraq, who wanted a free market solution to Iraq's troubles and started privatising state-owned companies.

Foreign Office spokesman Charles Heatley defended privatisation, claiming the state-run companies, which employed up to 500,000 people, were "loss-making, they're wealth-destroying, not wealth-creating". He said Bremer should do what he wanted with them. But while the American neo-con twenty-somethings who ran the Coalition Provisional Authority made grand plans to privatise the factories, they could not get them working. Privatisation stalled and the factories ground to a halt.

Bush's latest policy means abandoning privatisation altogether to reopen state-owned firms under US Army sponsorship. Britain is likely to welcome the new reconstruction plan, but without acknowledging any role in the old failed one.

"Try it again, General – 'This urgent surge will purge the insurgent scourge' "

Street Of Shame

JUST before Christmas the *Daily Mail* launched a frenzied assault on City bonuses, claiming that they "feed the politics of envy".

Lo and behold, last week the Daily Mail and General Trust published its annual report for 2006. DMGT chief exec Charles Sinclair had a bonus of £260,000 on a £948,000 salary. There were further hefty six-figure bonuses for Associated Newspaapers managing director Kevin Beatty and finance director Peter Williams. Oh, and Padraig Fallon, chairman of the DMGT subsidiary *Euromoney*, made more than £2m in profit-related bonuses.

What about *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre? Tragically, for the second year running he has no bonus at all.

On the other hand, his salary and benefits rose from £997,000 in 2005 to £1.23m last year. Isn't life grandy and dandy?!

THE *Guardian* joined the campaign against excessive pay and perks with a furious editorial this Monday. "The problem is getting worse," it warned. "Every year top executives vote themselves rewards totally out of kilter both with what their employees earn and the success they achieve."

Perhaps these fat-cats are simply following the example of the Guardian Media Group, which last year awarded editor Alan Rusbridger a £175,000 bonus while also raising his basic salary from £272,000 to £312,000 (a hike of 14.7 per cent) – after a year in which the *Grauniad* and *Observer* lost £49.9m. Incoming GMG chief executive Carolyn McCall had a 9 per cent pay rise to £280,000 plus a £215,000 bonus, while her retiring predecessor, Bob Phillis, collected a £407,000 salary (up 7 per cent) and a £280,000 bonus.

All rather "out of kilter", as the editorial put it, with "what their employees earn". Pleading poverty, the *Grauniad* awarded its hacks a 3 per cent pay rise last year.

ANOTHER setback for Richard "Dirty" Desmond's attempts to clean up his own tacky image and that of his ailing newspapers: news reaches the *Eye* of a lewd Punch and Judy-style pantomime staged at the *Daily Express* sub-editors' Christmas party in Borough Market.

In one gag, grotesque pink balloon breasts on a puppet depicting a female member of staff were burst and a puppet portraying *Express* editor Peter "Mentally" Hill as Yoda, the ugly Jedi dwarf in *Star Wars*, declared: "Ooh, you've got no tits! You're no fucking use to me now!"

Billed as "A Nightmare on Fleet Street", it has now turned into one for its author and leading performer, chief sub Keith Ging, as he sweats over whether anyone has told Hill about his creativity. "It was a throw-back to the worst excesses of old-style Fleet Street sexism," said one corkscrew-puller at the event, where many of Ging's so-called jokes were greeted with embarrassed silence. "The worst insults were directed at female colleagues." At least one female victim is considering a formal complaint.

Rather foolishly, Ging recorded his hideous performance on video. Perhaps Dirty Des will show it on his Fantasy Channel.

"MORE and more celebrities are spouting scientific mumbo-jumbo," blustered the *Daily Mail*'s Science Editor Michael Hanlon on 4 January. "Now the experts have had enough. The charity Sense About Science has produced a leaflet this week warning ignorant stars to think twice before endorsing 'quackery and mumbo-jumbo'. Many of the comments selected by the charity refer to diet and an obsession with 'chemicals' that often has no scientific grounding."

Quite right too. Far better to put your trust in the newspaper that so far this year alone has offered us "the Juice Doctor's DIY solutions to common health problems", instructions on how to "look 10 years younger in just two weeks with our nutritionist's unique eating plan", a set of recipes that Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood's wife insists "helped keep him alive despite his rock'n'roll lifestyle", Jonathan Cainer's guide to how the "Comet of Destiny" which is currently in our solar system "will affect your love life", as well as free DVD guides to aromatherapy, reiki, Indian head massage, feng shui and, er, "Mystical Ocean" as part of its "20 discs that will change your life" promotion. It is of course the *Daily Mail*.

One celebrity whose ideas about breast cancer prevention were dismissed by Hanlon as "harmless nonsense" with "no basis in reality" was Carole Caplin. The paper described her as "famous for previously advising Cherie Blair", but omitted to mention her current day job – as "lifestyle advisor" columnist for *The Mail on Sunday*.

GREAT MINDS...

"Their substitute striker, Alain Caveglia, got loose inside the box. The Calais central defender Fabrice Baron, a youth worker by trade, made three clumsy attempts to tackle him... Sibierski's spot-kick hit the Calais goalkeeper Cedric Schille on the right knee and bounced into the roof of the net."

– John Lichfield reports on the French cup final between Nantes and Calais, *Independent*, 9 May 2000.

"Then Nantes's substitute striker, Alain Caveglia, got loose inside the box. Three times Calais's centre-back Fabrice Baron blocked him with clumsy lunges... Sibierski's spot-kick hit goalkeeper Cedric Schille on the knee and bounced into the roof of the net."

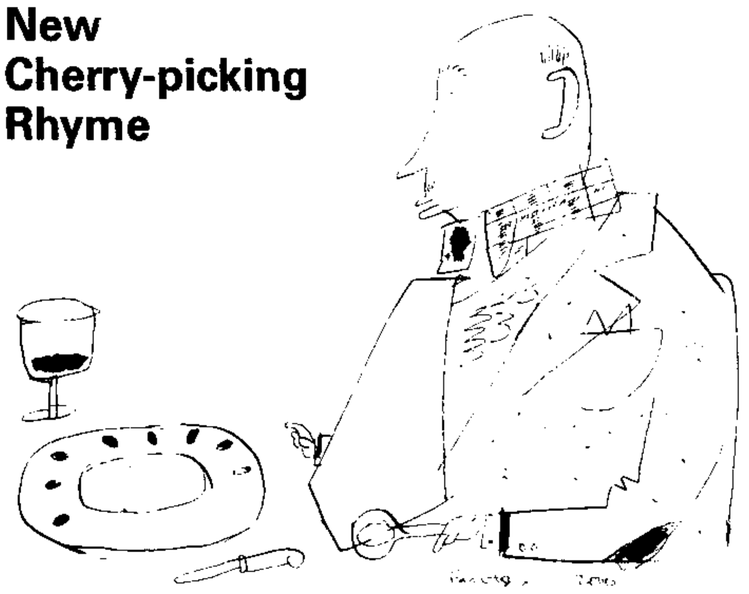
– Julie Welch recalls one of her "50 heartbreaking moments" in sporting history, Observer Sport Monthly, 7 January 2007.

"Please excuse Johnny for not doing his homework, but his dog ate him..."

Murderballs

"No one could have predicted that 2006 would end with news being dominated by the frantic killings of five Suffolk working girls. One by one, as the bodies were discovered, fear that a serial killer was on the prowl was spreading. With any disaster, there's an urgency to get images quickly, and with growing media competition what you want is an alternative to static images or dreary graphics – you want to attract viewers and give them something different... For more information about using Getmapping's aerial phoptographs for your production contact Claire Gray..." **Press release from Getmapping.com.**

New Cherry-picking Rhyme



"Heart attack, Alzheimer's, murdered, stroke, cancer, pneumonia, diabetes, die peacefully in bed"

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Men and women are dying with more teeth because of better dental care. But many of those teeth are loaded with potentially dangerous levels of mercury-laced fillings... Adults who have absorbed mercury or inhaled mercury vapour lose their appetite, are emotionally unstable, have trouble sleeping and develop gastric problems." – *Daily Mail*, 9 January, p.8.

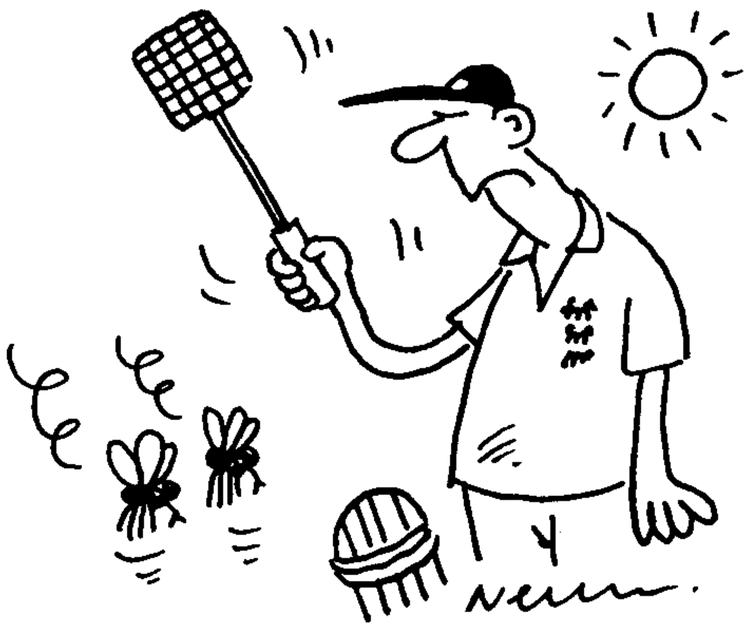
"Whatever the scare stories, there is no scientific evidence that mercury fillings 'poison' you... Studies have shown no link between mercury fillings and the sort of symptoms, from dizziness to aching joints, blamed on them." – *Daily Mail*, 9 January, p.45.

"BRITAIN is heading towards a gambling epidemic, with women and teenagers at greatest risk of addiction," warned the *Independent on Sunday* last weekend. "A major report from the British Medical Association... will warn that children are at increased risk of becoming gambling addicts with the liberalisation of gaming."

Over on the Independent's own website independentgaming.co.uk the young at heart (though strictly over-18, of course) can enjoy such delights as *Monopoly with Pass Go Bonus* ("The world's best-loved board game is now on-line's most exciting and rewarding video slot game"), *King Arthur's Hi-Lo* ("brave the dragon by continuing on to play for even larger prizes!"), *Baywatch Heatwave* ("a 5 reel, 9 line slot game based on the worldwide-popular Baywatch brand) and *DangerMouse* ("This slots version of the classic cartoon has a £500,000 jackpot prize to play for") – with a maximum deposit of a mere £10,000 a day. The service – complete with *Independent* masthead – is run by Cashcade, a company with a $100m annual turnover which is 20 percent owned by the newspaper's publisher.

The *Telegraph*, meanwhile was more sceptical about the BMA's report. "Gambling is a low priority for the health service, and long may it remain so," observed the paper's leader. "There are at least three inter-related reasons to oppose the introduction of state-funded anti-gambling advertisements and addiction clinics."

Surprisingly, those three inter-related reasons may not be called David, Frederick and Aidan Barclay: alarmed by what they described as "the current confusion and inconsistency in online gambling legislation worldwide", the *Telegraph*'s owners bailed out in September and sold their Ritz Club Online website to Ukbetting plc, retaining only the casino at the Ritz itself, which last year made a loss of nearly £1m. Ukbetting promptly renamed itself 365Media Group and was last week snapped up for £96m by none other than Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB. And what did his papers, the *Times* and the *Sun* have to say about the British Medical Association's shocking findings? Nothing at all.



"Relax, mate – he's a pom cricketer"

"SADDAM is dead", declared the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* on 30 December, with a scoop missed by its rivals, all of whom merely declared that the former ruler of Iraq was due to go to the gallows that morning.

A report bearing the timeline 3am described how Saddam "was hooded and led to the gallows in Baghdad before being executed without ceremony in front of Iraqi and American officials… It is believed his co-accused were also executed this morning."

Most impressive – except that as anyone who switched on a TV or radio that morning knew, only Iraqis were present for Saddam's hanging, he refused to wear a hood, and the execution of his co-accused was delayed until after the festival of Eid.

"The situation with the Saddam hanging illustrated that 'old media' difficulty of the fixed newspaper deadline and the complications of writing across time zones," remarked Washington correspondent Toby Harnden in a sniffy entry in his blog on the paper's website ten days later, responding to reader complaints. "Writing about Saddam's hanging before it happened was not my finest hour. It was one of those tricky journalistic challenges when no matter how much you hedge and speculate, the reality will always mischievously diverge from the finely turned piece one filed."

So when, exactly, did he file his piece, which the paper printed under the prominent time-line "3am"? Er, "we had to finalise the stories… by our deadline of 6pm London time (1pm Washington, 9pm Baghdad)".

What has the paper learned from the debacle? Not to admit to its mistakes. Harnden's blog on the matter has been deleted, and all journalists have been ordered to "avoid blogging about your relationship with your employer, whether the Telegraph Media Group as an entity, 'the desk' or 'my boss', even in jest", to "think carefully before blogging about journalistic 'tricks of the trade'", and, in future, not post any blogs unless they have been approved by an editor.

LORD LAMBTON was the Under-Secretary for Defence in Ted Heath's government until he resigned after being photographed smoking cannabis in bed with two prostitutes in 1973. He died in December, and is thus in no position to sue anybody.

Lord Levy is the Prime Minister's personal envoy to the Middle East, and despite his recent arrest and much speculation about his future is not only very much still alive but also a happily married multi-millionaire.

It could, therefore, prove to have been rather an expensive mistake for the *Daily Mail* to have plugged its exclusive 6 January story on the whereabouts of Norma Levy, one of the prostitutes involved in the 1973 scandal, on its website beneath the enticing headline "LORD LEVY'S CALL-GIRL: What happened to the infamous call-girl who helped destroy the political career of the adulterous Lord Levy?"

PAPARAZZI ROUND-UP

"WILL'S birthday plea over Kate: Leave her alone," shrieked the *Daily Mail* over the news that Prince William had accused press photographers of "harassment" and wanted "more than anything" for his girlfriend Kate Middleton to be left alone.

Naturally, the *Mail* itself was not to blame. "The PCC has very strict guidelines in respect of privacy, harassment and photographing individuals," the paper pointed out. "As always the *Daily Mail* will respect both the letter and the spirit of those rules. It would do nothing likely to cause distress or upset to Miss Kate Middleton and will always act responsibly in respect of any photographs taken of her."

That is a rather different promise to the more straightforward "the proprietor of the *Daily Mail* announced last night that his papers will not in future purchase pictures taken by paparazzi", as the paper trumpeted on 8 September, 1997, after the death of William's mother Princess Diana. But at least the *Mail* made an effort on the day of Ms Middleton's birthday, printing shots prominently attributed to "the Press Association, AP and the respected Getty Images".

The *Mail* was rather more coy about the provenance of two shots of her "leaving a London nightclub in the early hours" on 6 January, two of her being escorted to work by police on 5 January, two of her receiving a ticket from a traffic warden on 4 January and one of her "going out on the town" on 3 January – all of which it printed without any attribution. To prove it is not shy of revealing information, however, the paper informed readers that she drives a "blue VW golf" (pictured from two different angles), lives in Chelsea (complete with a shot of the street), and works for clothes firm Jigsaw "at their headquarters in Kew". To ensure stalkers were not disappointed, the *Mail* also helpfully pointed out that "she only works four days a week, Monday to Thursday", but on those days she "often pops out to pick up lunch from Marks and Spencers nearby".

NEWS INTERNATIONAL, publishers of the *Sun* and *News of the World*, went one further, with executive chairman Les Hinton announcing that no more paparazzo shots of Ms Middleton would appear in any of his titles – a promise he kept for almost seven hours, until NI freesheet *The London Paper* splashed with just such a picture.

The following morning's *Sun*, however, remained resolutely Middleton-free – save for a lengthy piece by *Sun* photographer Arthur Edwards, giving his thoughts on why "Kate will be Queen … but not quite yet". Edwards is, as the paper pointed out, the "Royals' favourite photographer" – so much so that Clarence House banned him from events involving Princes William and Harry in 2004 after the paper published his pictures of the heir to the throne's new girlfriend, one Kate Middleton, an "intrusion" into their "private skiing holiday" about which William was said to be "very unhappy".

Naturally, the paper's ethical stance only applies to pictures taken by paparazzi, as opposed to ones stolen by friends and sold to the *Sun*, like those of Prince Harry groping Natalie Pinkham's breast which the paper published on its front page (and was forced to apologise for) in August last year.

P.S. Rather than apologise for breaking his own publisher's ban the day before (despite a number of complaints from readers), *London Paper* editor Stefano Hatfield came up with a wizard wheeze for illustrating his obligatory "poor Kate" piece on 10 January. A half-page illustration by young cartoonist Matt Buck depicted a just-about-recognisable Middleton surrounded by rats carrying cameras – the rats purchasing their pictures presumably remaining just outside the frame. Could this be the beginning of a new trend, with cartoonists, photo-fitters and courtroom artists crawling around in the undergrowth around Caribbean beaches attempting to scribble a long-distance sketch of the royal couple before they are spotted?

P.P.S. News International's ban naturally only applies to Middleton herself – her boyfriend remains fair game. On 11 January the paper illustrated its story of how Prince William had had to undergo gruelling army training despite "a late date with his sweetheart" with a snap of the Prince taken by freelance photographer Doug Seeburg.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Stop harassing Kate, pleads William.

Kate Middleton finds the number of paparazzi hounding her "frightening and upsetting".

In pictures: Kate's 25th birthday.

Publishers wishing to reproduce photographs on this page should phone 44 (0) 207 538 7505 or e-mail syndication@telegraph.co.uk.

Daily Telegraph online, 10 January.

THE *Daily Express*, meanwhile, carried its own interesting interpretation of the PCC code of practice on 29 December. "On December 16 we published an unauthorised photograph of Kate Winslet and her son Joe. We sincerely regret publishing the photograph in question and now accept that, contrary to our belief at the time, photographs of Ms Winslet's children should not be published without their parents' consent. We unreservedly apologise to Ms Winslet and her family for any distress we may have caused them."

What the PCC code actually says on the topic is this: "Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life … Editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life." So the Express's story – that Joe had been given a piggy-back by his mother – was surely a no-no whether Ms Winslet consented or not. Unless, of course, this is Fleet Street's first ever public acknowledgement that the PCC's rules only apply to those parents who can be bothered to kick up a fuss?

PARENTS who have long battled the system on behalf of children with learning or behavioural problems were delighted by the news that Ruth Kelly, former education minister and now minister for communities, has decided to buy her way out of it.

Not, of course, because they think she is right, but because her own double standards expose the government's appalling neglect of special needs children. After all it was Kelly who so spectacularly failed while in office, from December 2004 to May 2006, to improve the lot of children with special educational needs in mainstream schooling. Last July, only two months after Kelly lost the education brief, a Commons committee said the special educational needs system was "not fit for purpose" and was failing many pupils. It accused ministers of "an abdication of responsibility" over the closure of special schools.

Just as well for Kelly Junior, then, that the former education minister can afford the "exceptional" facilities available at Bruern Abbey, which boasts on its website of being the only preparatory school in Britain to have "as its main purpose" the preparation of dyslexic and dyspraxic boys for mainstream private secondary schools.

Less fortunate families must battle to get specialist help. One family told the *Eye* how their son has struggled in a mainstream school for the past four years while they try to get the all-important diagnosis and "statement of need". Their local authority – like many others – has come up with ever more ingenious means of delay. Most recently, and after finally securing an appointment to an educational specialist unit, they were told they needed a referral through the health service via their GP – only to find themselves after several more months back at the same place.

None of this is new. On the back of a damning audit commission report four years ago, the *Eye* highlighted parents' problems getting even basic provision in the state sector: "School heads worried about league tables and a drain on their budgets are often unwelcoming. Special schools are closing down at an alarming rate… To a local education authority a child with a detailed 'statement of need' is a financial liability. The temptation is therefore to delay identifying the children and to understate their needs in order to save money, which of course can be devastating to the children and their families."

Parents can now only hope that the row engulfing Kelly embarrasses ministers into investing and improving their children's chances too.

CALLED TO ORDURE

MAD scenes at Westminster the other night when the House of Lords discussed gay rights in Northern Ireland. In Westminster timetabling terms this was wee buns, a minor event given just an hour over dinner. A Government victory was never in doubt.

So why the fuss? The Chamber was full, several speeches were laced with nastiness, and outside Parliament something like 1,000 religious protestors were belting out hymns and crying forth in the name of Jesus.

The debate had been initiated by Lord Morrow, a Democratic Unionist. This was the first time the Upper House had heard much from the DUP's newly arrived contingent (they have previously been deemed too small a party to warrant a Lords bench). It was not a particularly pretty experience. Some peers are hoping it is not a sign of things to come.

Morrow probably had a point, however, when he claimed that gay rights was unusual in being able to unite Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. If the Stormont Assembly was not currently crocked it would quite possibly throw out these regulations, almost unanimously. How would a New Labour government which claims to believe in devolution react to that?

Things started with some procedural housekeeping by Lord Evans (publisher Matthew Evans). He had lost his voice so comprehensively to the lurgy that his contribution had several elderly peers twiddling with their hearing aids. "Can't hear!" they quavered. The air started to squeak as though filled with bats.

Beside Lord Morrow sat the scowling form of Lady Paisley, wife of the Rev Ian and another new arrival at Westminster. She looked like one of those tall-hatted grannies sometimes found in Larson cartoons. Lady Paisley's beloved lurked in the sidelines, sitting at the far end of the House where MPs are allowed to watch Lords debates.

Maurice Morrow, a former estate agent, is one of those tub-thumping churchgoers so disgusted by the thought of ho-mo-sexu-ality that when he utters the very word he breaks it into four distinct sections, as though each part was separated by antiseptic gauze. If Morrow had used the kinder word "gay", or opted for some humour, or murmured away in a self-deprecating manner as a couple of other peers on his side of the argument later did, he might have been heard more receptively by the House. Instead he rasped in a harsh Ulster brogue, his tone one of intense displeasure. Peers do not warm to that sort of thing.

Morrow's main opponent was Labour's Lord Smith – the former culture secretary, Chris Smith. Lady Paisley stared straight ahead while he was speaking, a pillar of salt perhaps unwilling to bring herself to inspect a sodomite. "Sodomy" was certainly a word heard when that old charmer Lord Tebbit spoke in the debate. He spat it out with relish, trying to goad progressives to complain.

Smith chose not to shout or lecture peers, instead delivering a soapy homily full of professions of his own Christian faith. A blatantly wet (but skilful) performance, it was rewarded with several "hear hears". He may not be the most regular attender of the Lords but he was far shrewder in handling the House. Those listening to his speech included bouffant Lord (John) Patten, a cackling Lord (Stanley) Kalms and Lady O'Cathain, who squinted as though she had just bitten on a lemon. Although those three all voted against the gay lobby many other Tories accepted the gentle nudge of the Cameron leadership and gave Morrow, er, the bum's rush.

The evening's most boring speech came from retired Anglican archbishop Lord Eames, former Primate of All Ireland. Eames, although a perfectly decent fellow, is for some reason revered as a sage. Shome mishtake shurely. His speech, delivered like some mighty sermon, was a repetitive whinge about how Ulster's churches had not been consulted properly by London about gay rights. Would that really have made any difference to their position?

Light relief was provided by tiny Lady Blood, a 68-year-old spinster who announced that she, egad, had often shared a bedroom with another woman. Before Lady Paisley's eyeballs disappeared round the back of her head Lady Blood explained that she had shared bedrooms when on conferences, for the sake of convenience rather than raw lust.

After a little more sniping between Morrow and Smith the proposal was put to a vote and the anti-gay crowd were thumped: 199 to just 68. For the DUP the question must now be whether the exercise won them any new friends, or whether, by choosing such a topic for their first big Lords excursion, they have damaged their chances of gaining influence when the Upper House next debates security matters or the political settlement in Northern Ireland.

'Gavel Basher'

DOUBLETHINK OF THE WEEK

"The Government today launched its progress report on 'Transformational Government: enabled by technology' with the news that at least 551 government websites are to be cut to make access to information easier for citizens and businesses."

– Press release by Cabinet Office, 10 January

"Isn't it great to see all the religions gathered together in peace, love and understanding?"

DESPITE being the son of Professor Ralph Miliband, author of *Parliamentary Socialism*, Blairite boy-wonder David Miliband needs to swot up a bit on his party's history. Speaking to Labour supporters and trade unionists at a gala dinner in Gateshead last month, he boasted: "Wasn't the Labour Party fortunate that when the trade unions were looking for a party to affiliate to, they chose the Labour Party?"

But the unions didn't so much "choose" the Labour Party: they created it. The famous meeting in 1900 which decided to campaign for "a distinct Labour group in parliament" was summoned because of a resolution passed at the TUC the previous year. Most founder members of the Labour Representation Committee (as it was originally called) were trade union leaders.

Given that young Miliband was parachuted into his South Shields constituency with the support of northern union barons against the wishes of local members, and that he'll rely on their support in any future leadership bid, perhaps he should try to be rather more respectful of their historic (and current) role.

AMERICAN construction giant Bechtel is so keen to get contracts out of the British government that its wealthy boss, Riley Bechtel, personally lobbied the transport secretary Douglas Alexander last year.

Bechtel has a reputation for snapping up politicians, earned when the company hired influential American politicos George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger. It seems Bechtel is taking the same approach in Britain: when Riley Bechtel arrived at Alexander's office, he was accompanied by an employee, one Lawrie Quinn, who up until 2005 was Labour MP for Scarborough.

Quinn will certainly be familiar to the transport secretary, although not as a lobbyist. From 2001 to 2005, he was Alexander's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Quinn, a former British Rail engineer, was also chair of the Parliamentary All Party Rail Group. Which is handy, because a note of the meeting, dated 12 June 2006 and obtained by the *Eye* under a Freedom of Information enquiry, shows that Riley Bechtel was keen to discuss the Crossrail scheme (a rail line crossing London from east to west). Bechtel already has a £10m contract to plan the line, but the company is keen to win the much bigger job, worth £10bn, of actually building it.

The government has yet to win final parliamentary approval for the Crossrail. But the notes, heavily redacted with several blanked-out words, show Alexander reassured Riley Bechtel that "HMG was committed to seeing the [Crossrail] Bill through Parliament".

IS MANSFIELD's Alan Meale on target to score an own goal? The football-supporting MP is attempting to force the official supporters' website of Mansfield Town FC to hand over the names of two fans that made allegedly libellous comments about him on a message board.

Stagsnet, the website of the Stags Supporters Association (SSA), had voluntarily removed the offending remarks, which followed more than a year of scandal at the club. The Labour MP had repeatedly defended majority shareholder and sole director Keith Haslam. Mr Haslam had to apologise to the League Two club in December 2005 after the *Guardian* revealed that he had taken out large personal loans from the club's cash. Mansfield Town hit the headlines again last summer with allegations that the club had drawn money for salaries from its associated charity, the Stags Community Trust, of which Mr Meale is the chairman. Meanwhile a SportEngland audit found that more than £23,000 of lottery money had been misspent by the club, including £255 on a parking fine.

In August, a judge at Manchester County Court described a club disciplinary process against its former manager Keith Curle, which was chaired by Alan Meale, as "a sham".

In a statement, the SSA's committee said that being taken to court by the MP had been "very stressful" for them as volunteers. "SSA have had no option other than to follow legal advice throughout," they said. "The Judge ordered the release of registration details and found our conduct to be entirely proper and reasonable and endorsed such conduct by ordering Mr Meale to pay SSA's legal costs."

But Mr Meale has told local press in Mansfield that he intends to win that money back with a libel action against the two fans – an interesting approach to protecting his constituents.

GRAVY TRAINING

MORE embarrassment for the Welsh Assembly as it continues mopping up after ELWa – the defunct body that funded post-16 education and overpaid training providers to the tune of £4.6m (*Eye* 1172).

In November, the Assembly scrapped a contract with Olympic Training Services, a firm ELWa hired to provide courses in care for pre-school children and the elderly.

The move was not before time – Olympic had continued expanding despite getting dismal grades from inspectors in November 2004. When re-inspected last April, it had 410 learners on its books, 150 more than when inspectors called previously.

Inspectors found "many important shortcomings" in Olympic's leadership and "some good features but shortcomings in important areas" in learner achievement. Meanwhile the value of Olympic's business from ELWa shot up from £437,000 in 2002-03 to £1.2m in 2004-05.

Last year the Assembly's audit committee condemned standards of financial control among Welsh training providers. Indeed, it turns out that a switcheroo of training companies took place right under ELWa's nose. The original company with which ELWa signed the contract, Olympic Training Services, changed its name to Arrow in July 2003. In the same month, Arrow directors Eddie Hewett and Mike Jago registered a new company called OTS (Wales) Ltd, trading as "Olympic Training Services". In August 2004, ELWa "renewed" its contract – with OTS (Wales) Ltd. The Assembly now admits ELWa only found out about the whole Olympic/Arrow business "during an internal review after the event, at which stage the new contract was in force with OTS (Wales) Ltd".

Meanwhile Arrow has been subject to a winding-up order since September 2004, and is due to be formally liquidated in February. Jago, who resigned from Arrow four days after the name change, refused to talk about the firm's problems, while Hewett told the *Eye* that he was "disappointed" by the Welsh Assembly's cancellation of the contract.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

THE notion that universities should take legal action against their own students for protesting appears to be catching on.

After six students were convicted of aggravated trespass over a protest at Lancaster University (*Eyes passim*), the University of Sussex is threatening to take students who took part in a peaceful demonstration to court for asking for more learning.

Eighty students occupied the university library in November to demand longer library hours, more contact hours with lecturers and better pay and conditions for staff. During the Christmas break, 50 of them received letters from deputy vice-chancellor Paul Layzell accusing them of breaking an injunction obtained by the university to stop the demonstration. The letter says: "The University is currently taking steps to identify individuals who were part of the unlawful occupation, following which it may instigate internal disciplinary proceedings and/or seek to action [sic] through the courts."

It adds that the university is seeking to recover its legal and security costs "already amounting to several thousand pounds" from the protesters and that if further occupations take place the university will consider closing the library.

Number crunchins

1,000 ■ Number of foreign criminals left at large in UK without being considered for deportation after release from prison

500 ■ Number of British criminals left at large in UK with serious offences committed abroad unrecorded

50 ■ Directors left at large at Home Office after they passed "capability assessments" brought in as a result of first scandal

0 ■ Staff sacked at Home Office as a result

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE establishment of a far-right political grouping in the European Parliament has got the UK Independence Party acting more than usually paranoid.

Former UKIP MEP Ashley Mote is negotiating to join the grouping, giving Tories in the parliament the opportunity to gleefully resurrect David Cameron's UKIP "nutters and fruitcakes" jibe. Mote, the Tories point out, had the UKIP whip withdrawn in 2004 not for any ideological reason, but because of fraud allegations.

EU-phemisms

They will ignore them, and we won't enforce them

One victim of UKIP's fear of being tarred by the fascist brush has been EUObserver.com, a Brussels-based EU news website. Some financial support for EUObserver came from the parliament's Eurosceptic Independence/ Democracy Group, of which UKIP is a part. The money was given on the basis of editorial independence, but UKIP was notorious for interference, complaining frequently that the website didn't feature them enough.

When EUObserver did publish an article mentioning UKIP – suggesting that some UKIP MEPs were considering joining the far-right group – for UKIP it was the last straw. The party denied the story and received an apology, but, under pressure from its leadership, the financial support (already under review) was cut.

TV

Celebrity Big Brother (Channel 4)
Fortune: Million Pound Giveaway (ITV1)

AS PART of the media teasing before the revelation of the guests on this year's *Celebrity Big Brother*, the producers leaked to the press clues as to the type of guests to be expected. The categories included "star of 1970s American TV show", "controversial newspaper columnist" and "member of a famous American family pop group".

This strategy backfired because the tabloids excitedly told their readers to expect Paul-Michael Glaser from *Starsky & Hutch*, Robert Kilroy-Silk and Donny Osmond or David Cassidy. Whereas what we ended up with was Dirk Benedict from *The A-Team*, Carole Malone of the *Sunday Mirror* and Jermaine Jackson from the Jackson Five.

This regrettably meant that that the seventh series of *Big Brother* began with a sense of disappointment, which was soon increased twice: first by the contestants they had lined up alongside these nonentities (Kenny Everett's female sidekick, a boy-bander who had just managed to tell the *Sun* that he was gay) and then by the rapid departures of three of the people they had managed to persuade to appear.

The one genuine dark horse – wacky geriatric movie director Ken Russell – walked after barely 24 hours, as did post-punk rocker Donny Tourette, who had been cast in the Pete Burns role as this year's foul-mouthed malcontent, and then Leo Sayer, the 70s crooner who was supposed to supply the ironic comedy in 2007. The scenes of Sayer hurling f and c-words at the security guards as they failed to prevent him leaving the compound was a sign that CBB7 is in serious trouble. Not only had the supposedly gently odd one turned into the sweary one after only a few days, but the one who was supposed to be the sweary one had already walked out.

The producers may try to write this off as bad luck but the catastrophe of this year's housemates is entirely of their own making. In the cruel way of modern TV, Tourette and Sayer had been thrown together in the house despite the fact that Donny had

once slept with Leo's wife. If the executives were aware of this fact, they're amoral; if they weren't aware, they're incompetent. Neither is defensible.

Equally, if Tourette didn't leave because he was guilty over Sayer, then he left because he couldn't stand the thought of being in the house with Jade Goody, the minus-IQ runner-up in a past edition of non-celebrity *Big Brother*, who had been introduced with her mother *(see lookalikes)* and boyfriend as this year's gimmick. Ken Russell has made clear that the reason he left was that he was promised fellow guests along the lines of Germaine Greer, but got the Goodys instead.

But the idea of introducing Jade is symptomatic of what's gone wrong with CBB7. There was a definite, if sadistic, pleasure in watching the competition between people who had been thrown off the fame train. But once the show starts accepting as celebrities people who were invented by the civilian edition of *Big Brother*, the whole thing disappears up what has always been the series' third favourite body-part: the arse.

The biggest problem CBB now has is demonstrated by one of the shows competing in the time slot on Tuesday nights. *Fortune: Million Pound Giveaway* features five rich public figures dividing up a million pounds between members of the public who pitch in the studio for the cash they lack: a kind of big budget, peak-time equivalent of the Eye Need columns at the back of this magazine.

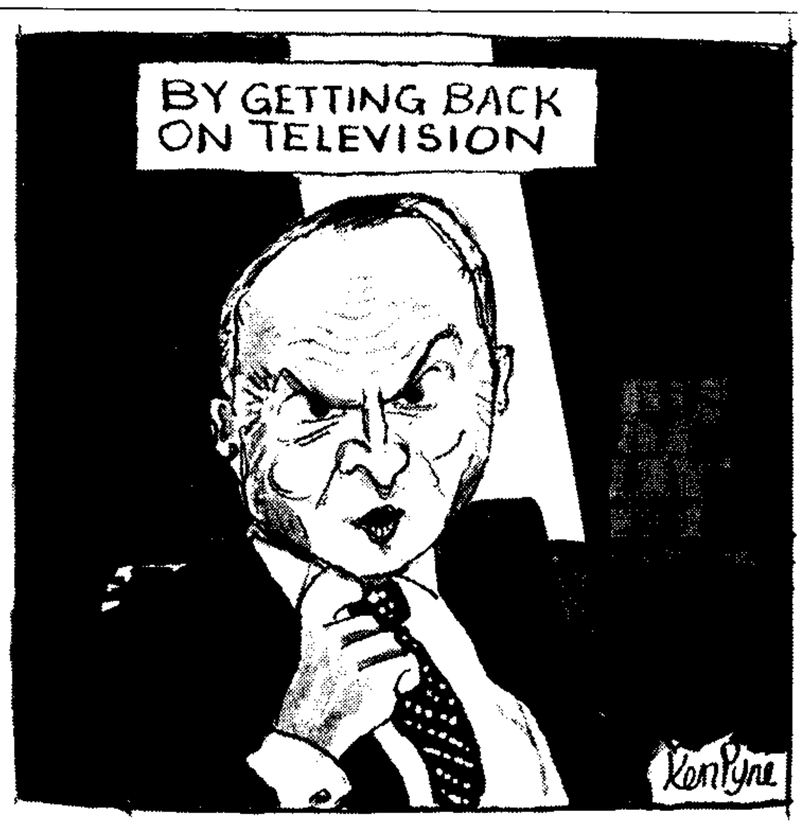
One of the panel deciding between the genuinely deserving and those trying it on is celebrity convict Lord Jeff Archer, who after grudgingly admitting in the little film profile at the top that he once "ended up in jail" is allowed to sit in the studio doing his ridiculously hammy furrowed brow and pursed lip shtick as he adjudicates between the single mother who dreams of sending her kid to posh college and the circus fire-eater who wants to do an especially spectacular stunt involving a giant toilet u-bend.

The relevance to *Celebrity Big Brother* is that the crooked novelist's name will have been the first they wrote on their wish-list this year. Disgraced and famous, desperate to rehabilitate himself with the public, Jeff would, a few years ago, have been perfect fodder for the diary room and the shared dorm. But now, his comeback is divided between this welfare game-show and a forthcoming meretricious BBC2 project in which he serves as a member of a celebrity jury trying a case.

The fallen sleb now has alternative potential comeback vehicles queuing up in the car-park of the job centre (or jail). Amazingly, Jeff has been able to avoid *Celebrity Big Brother*, *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!*, *Strictly Come Dancing*, *The Two of Us* and still get his mug-shot on the box twice. As Channel 4 is finding out, why on earth, with all these kinder options, would the A-list failed and disgraced want to share their bedroom and their bathroom with Jade Goody and a lot of forgotten pop-stars?

'Remote Controller'

FORTUNE
MILLION POUND GIVEAWAY
THE SHOW THAT SETS OUT TO PROVE...
& A FANTASIST YOU ARE.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF A LIAR, CON MAN...
YOU WILL BE REWARDED...



DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which animated cartoon bear has a name that suggests he's a follower of Hindu philosophy?

Contestant: Paddington.

Robinson: Which ship started its round-the-world voyage in 1831 with Charles Darwin as its on-board naturalist?

Contestant: The Marie Rose Celeste.

Robinson: In catering, a famous chain of tea shops and so-called "corner houses" was opened in London in 1894 by Joseph who?

Contestant: Goebbels.

Quiz of the Week, LBC

Jim Davis *(exasperated)*: Name any British actor.

Caller: Mel Gibson?

AD NAUSEAM

BIG FOOD has responded to government cajoling over food labelling by sticking up two fingers in the form of a £4m advertising campaign against government policy.

Over the next 18 months, a sweet-toothed, barrel-bellied coalition of supermarkets and food companies will tell the public about a new food labelling system based on Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA) that lets them know what is in the food they are buying.

If that were the sole purpose of the campaign, this would be an entirely noble undertaking. But given that those involved include Cadbury-Schweppes, Coca-Cola, Kellogg's, Sunny Delight and Tesco – companies that would barely exist at all if people in the early 20th century knew what the people of the early 21st century do about diet, and that have spent the latter part of the 20th century using marketing to sugar an already-sugary pill – we are entitled to ask what brought on this outburst of altruism.

The real purpose of the ads is to render an alternative labelling system, championed by the Food Standards Agency, stillborn. Under this traffic-light scheme, snacks high in sugar, salt or fat would be marked with a red light, indicating that they should be treated with caution, and healthier foods get a green light. The big fat coalition complains that the scheme is too simplistic, and will stigmatise entire food categories. But to everyone else these are precisely its strengths – people can understand it quickly (a Which? survey in July last year found that GDA left two-thirds of consumers confused); and if entire categories are stigmatised, well, perhaps we just shouldn't be eating them, however much it might cost Coca-Kellogg's.

The move is an embarrassment for health minister Caroline Flint, who spent months wooing the likes of Kellogg's et al (*Eyes passim*) with offers of talks, voluntary codes and holding back on regulation. Perhaps the Frosties firm and its pals hope consumers will believe they know more about healthy eating than the government. After all, their coalition includes such experts in nutrition as Tate & Lyle and Vimto (slogan "Shlurple the purple").

With the FSA planning an ad campaign of its own in the next fortnight, the sum of £5m in total will disappear into the admen's pockets (when it could have been spent on educating the public on nutrition so they wouldn't need to decipher labels in the first place). And who will win the day? The big fat coalition is outspending the FSA four to one and has already started using its GDA labels on several thousand product lines. In advertising, media spend matters. Though the FSA launches its TV counter-thrust in a fortnight, it actually ran ads for the traffic-light system back in September. No one noticed then, and now that Big Food has decided to flex its financial muscles, chances are no one will notice now.

MEDIA NEWS

BBC HACKS have learned more over the New Year about where compulsory redundancies will bite in order to meet the latest "Value for Money" targets. None of them are in admin or management.

Instead, "Radio News reporters in Manchester and Leeds" will be hit, despite a series of commitments from the BBC to strengthen its regional output. Also for the chop are "reporters and correspondents on *Newsnight*", a so-called flagship programme that will become even more studio-based, more graphics dependent and more London-centric than it already is.

Hacks in "Media Exchange" have also been put on notice. Among their duties is the transfer of material from tape and other formats to "digital platforms" such as the iPod; all this at a time when Mark Thompson has promised more podcasts and more availability of BBC output across digital services.

"TELEVISION CENTRE faces closure," reports the *Guardian*, as plans are announced to sell off the site to what may well be rival broadcasters in the private sector.

"The aim of this is to cut costs and provide buildings suitable for digital broadcasting," says a BBC spokeswoman, adding that before a possible sell-off, "we are currently costing a wide range of options, including a major refurbishment of Television Centre."

So the licence-payer could soon be called on to fund the renovation of yet another BBC asset just before it is sold off to an independent company.

ASTONISHING scenes at the Liverpool-Arsenal FA Cup match on 6 January, broadcast live on BBC1. Thousands of fans on the Kop held up coloured cards spelling out, in huge letters, "THE TRUTH", and for the first six minutes of play the crowd kept up a deafening chant of "Justice for the 96". Several placards proclaimed: "Kelvin Mackenzie is a liar".

Eighteen years after the Hillsborough disaster, in which 96 people died, the former *Sun* editor hasn't been forgiven for his front-page story "THE TRUTH", which alleged that Liverpool fans had been robbed and urinated on by fellow-Scousers even as they lay dying. Kelvin further inflamed the animosity last month by saying he had apologised at the time "only because Rupert Murdoch told me to. I wasn't sorry then and I'm not sorry now."

Though the protest was widely reported elsewhere, the *Sun*'s lengthy match report ignored it. Alas for Rebekah Wade, several Anfield fans made good the omission with comments on the *Sun* sports website, whose controller had apparently fallen asleep.

LIZ HURLEY's presenting debut on Sky One's *Project Catwalk* last year was decried as "wooden" and "witheringly boring" by critics, with even slavishly supportive sister-paper the *Sun* mocking up a picture of Hurley as a felled log.

"Project Catwalk is turning into project switch-off," noted the *Observer* in January 2006. "The show attracted 250,000 viewers, or 1.5 per cent audience share last week… Sky has spent about £1m marketing *Catwalk* – or £4 per viewer. Perhaps it would be cheaper to pay people to watch it." For the second series, which started this month, Hurley was replaced as presenter by Kelly Osbourne. It debuted on 8 January with 196,000 viewers.

Does this mean Sky will be dropping the show? Unlikely. Another gorgeous pouting female involved with the programme is the owner of Shine, the production company that makes it – one Elisabeth Murdoch.

ANYONE wishing to be a contestant on Jeffrey Archer's *Million Pound Giveaway* had to fill in an application form which included the following questions: "Do you have a criminal record? Have you ever been charged with a crime? Have you ever been convicted of a crime?"

How fortunate for Lord Archer that the production company isn't so fastidious when it comes to choosing panellists!

Number crunchings

3.6m ■ Number of people watching Celebrity Big Brother at 8.30pm on Friday 5 January

3.8m ■ Number of people watching *Grow Your Own Veg: Potatoes* on BBC2 at same time

CELEBRITY BIG BROTHER LOOKALIKE

Jermaine Jackson

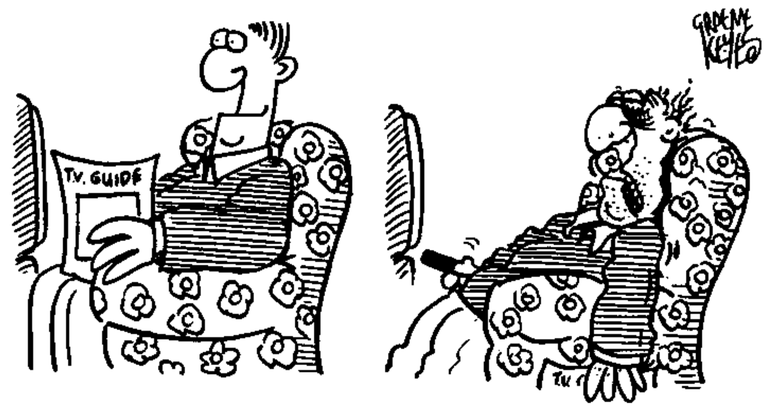
Germaine Yackson

"*BIG BROTHER* won't faze this old devil," predicted Suzanne "Mystic" Moore in the *Mail on Sunday* on 7 January.

"When Ken Russell appeared in his brocade waistcoat huffing and puffing and singing his way into the *Celebrity Big Brother* house I was grateful to be reminded of this great British one-off… That he should find himself in a reality TV show pushing 80 is but one of the many bizarre episodes of his life. No one in the house will faze him."

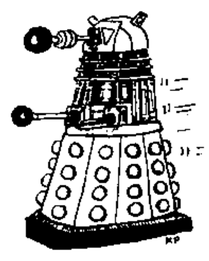
That very afternoon Russell left the *Big Brother* house, refusing to spend any more time with the "vulgar, horrible and objectionable" family of Jade Goody, and telling reporters "I can't take it. I was worried I'd have another stroke."

Watching TV makeover shows



Before After

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"Sometimes, we all need a bit of extra help when it comes to decoding the language of brands. The glossary will help you to understand the BBC brand portfolio. For the big picture, review the *BBC Brand map*.

Content brands: A grouping of various brands defined by editorial content. They are targeted at niche audiences and enjoy multi-platform access. Examples: programmes such as EastEnders, initiatives such as Fat Nation, events such as the BBC Proms and any written content on bbc.co.uk.

Initiative brands: One-off or long-term initiatives that expand the public service remit of the BBC – as a broadcaster and content provider. Initiative brands usually begin as programme brands, but once the programme season has finished, their efforts continue. Examples: The Big Read, Fat Nation.

Platform brands: Brands that define means by which audiences access BBC content. Examples: bbc.co.uk, BBCi."

– BBC Branding Glossary, bbc.co.uk

JUST FANCY THAT

"Heathrow refused to comment on individual cases."

– BBC Radio 4 news reports on the Heathrow baggage backlog, 10 am, Saturday 6 January.

OBITUARIES

■ Kenneth Livesey (77), former priest at St Paul's Church, Royton.

■ Joe Jagger (93), former Greenfield resident and son of rock star Mick Jagger.

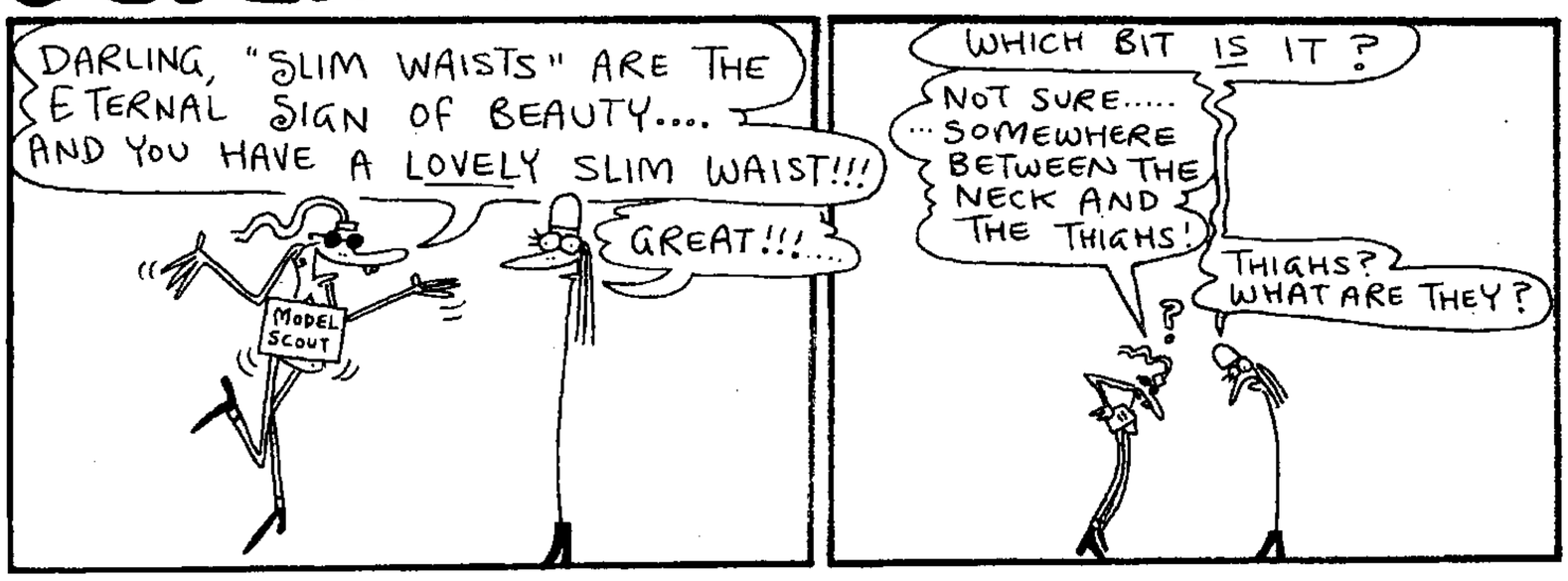
Oldham Evening Chronicle

The *'Private Eye at 45'* cartoon exhibition at the Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell Street, continues until 11 February. Don't miss it.

Peter Blake from Kingston wins a year's sub for his bubble competition entry.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


DARLING, "SLIM WAISTS" ARE THE ETERNAL SIGN OF BEAUTY.... AND YOU HAVE A LOVELY SLIM WAIST!!!
GREAT!!!....
MODEL SCOUT
WHICH BIT IS IT?
NOT SURE..... ...SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE NECK AND THE THIGHS!
THIGHS? WHAT ARE THEY?

Down on the Farm

AFTER a dozen years when British agriculture has been in almost perpetual crisis, there has inevitably been a faint flicker of interest among farmers as to what Mr Cameron's new Conservative Party might do if by any chance it won the next election.

Long gone are the days when farmers were regarded as the backbone of the Tory party. But so dire has been their experience under the likes of Nick Brown, Margaret Beckett and "Baby Ben" Bradshaw that surely, some begin to think, things could hardly be worse under the Tories.

With this thought in mind, Dave chose to address this year's Oxford Farming Conference. This was to be his pitch for what used to be called "the farming vote", which is why he began by explaining, somewhat implausibly, that as someone who grew up in the countryside and still lives there some of the time, he cares "passionately" about it.

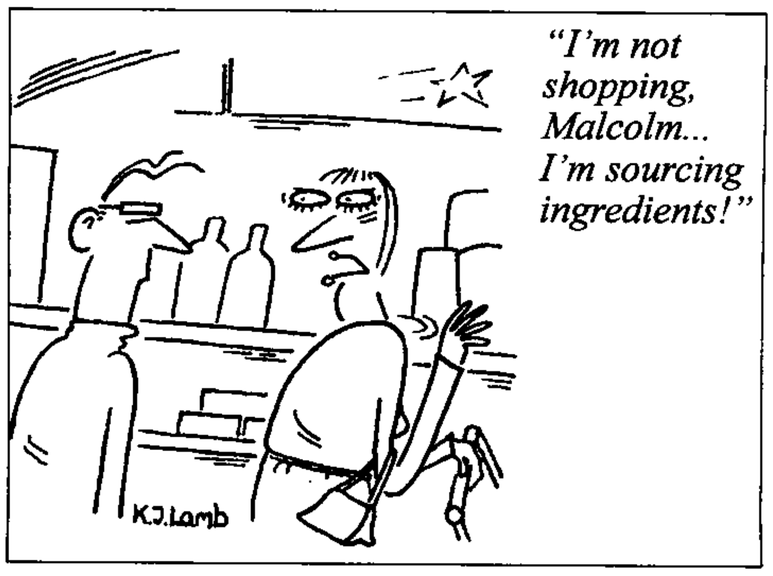
Inevitably, since he doesn't appear to know much about farming, he soon got on to that other subject he cares "passionately" about, climate change. "Everyone," he said, "now understands the importance of combating climate change" and "farmers have a huge role to play". They can, for instance, produce, er, "wool for home insulation" – has anyone told Dave that the bottom fell so far out of the wool market that there is hardly anyone left to shear the sheep? Then they can produce "willow coppicing" to provide "fuel for local boilers". Oh, and they can grow "hemp to be turned into breeze blocks".

So that's how farmers can help Dave save the planet. But in return, he went on, we can all help save our farmers by buying British food. And how is this to be achieved? What is needed is "far more rigorous and transparent food labelling". "People want to eat British wherever possible," apparently, and they're not just supporting British farmers out of "a desire to limit carbon emissions". But the trouble is consumers can't always know whether the food they are buying is British. "Food," Dave lamented, "can be imported to Britain, processed here, and subsequently labelled in a way that suggests it's genuinely British. That is completely wrong."

If our lad had been in parliament for slightly more than five years, he might have known that many of his fellow MPs have been saying this for a very long time. Back in 2000, one of his frontbenchers, Stephen O'Brien, even won all-party support for a Bill that would have made it illegal to label as "British" any food that was not grown in Britain. But as a dim little agriculture minister famously had to point out to the House, this would be impossible, because it would be in breach of EU law. Under EU rules, it is perfectly legal to import chickens from Thailand pumped full of hormones which are illegal in the EU and then, so long as they are repacked in the UK, slap a Union Jack on them and sell them as "UK produce".

Dave can huff and puff as much as he likes, but he is never going to persuade our European partners to change that law. So if that is all he has to offer farmers (along, of course, with his idea about growing hemp to make breeze blocks), one suspects that, come the election, he is hardly going to sweep the shires. Even if he does occasionally spend time in the countryside.

'Muckspreader'



"I'm not shopping, Malcolm... I'm sourcing ingredients!"

AIR RAGE

TONY BLAIR's pronouncement that he wouldn't interfere in people's freedom to fly as often as they like caused a political storm last week. But really he was only voicing the policy his government has followed quietly for years – supporting growth in aviation while constraining greener forms of transport.

Blair reckons it would be electoral suicide to curb the masses of flights that export British cash by taking people overseas, not just for holidays but for weekend breaks, shopping and parties. His excuse about personal freedom is a fig leaf; what he really fears is not the public getting upset, but powerful vested interests. After all, this month train fares rose above the inflation rate yet again – unpopular with voters but acceptable to the likes of Richard Branson and FirstGroup. And Blair's government has rejected significant increases to rail capacity; overcrowding boosts rail profits and encourages more people to use cars and planes, so it's a policy that satisfies big business all round.

Blair signalled again last week that he was singing from a hymn sheet provided by the air lobby when he gave the following excuse for his inaction: "Britain is two percent of the world's emissions. We shut down all of Britain's emissions tomorrow, the growth in China will make up the difference in two years."

What he didn't say is that Britain is 0.9 percent of the world's population, so we already emit more than twice our fair share; or that China's growing emissions are partly a result of manufacturing ever more goods for Europeans, while Britain has fewer and fewer factories to contribute to its total emissions.

Aviation chiefs love making similar comparisons to prove the futility of tackling aircraft emissions. In November, British Airways boss Willie Walsh said: "Air travel is not the biggest single contributor … We produce about five percent of the man-made CO_2 in the UK. Now, that's significantly behind other industries." Two days earlier Ryanair chief

"Look – it's Low Carbon Emission Man"

Michael O'Leary said aircraft were responsible for a "Mickey Mouse" three percent of Europe's CO_2 emissions, compared with 25 percent from road transport.

These arguments don't bear scrutiny either. "Other industries" include power generation and domestic heating, used by almost the entire population. Road transport is vital for everybody; even people who never use cars and buses consume goods delivered by road to shops or homes. What's remarkable about O'Leary's comparison is that road transport contributes only eight times more CO_2 than aircraft, despite its far greater significance. Britain would starve or die of cold without these "other industries", but could just about survive without stag parties in Prague or shopping weekends in New York.

'Fokker'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Wessex abuse

WHEN rail franchises were first dished out, passengers had the small comfort of knowing that companies would get an official warning if services got too bad. The chaos now unleashed by First Great Western in the south west is as horrendous as anything else franchisees have caused since privatisation, but this time the government hasn't rapped FGW over the knuckles.

Why the change in policy? The government now specifies franchises itself, and in such minute detail that many of the problems affecting passengers are of its own making. Its attempt to cut excessive profits at rolling-stock leasing companies backfired when rail regulators said the main problem was the government's handling of new franchises. Censuring FGW for poor service, in a franchise that's under a year old, would again draw attention to the government's failings. Far better to pretend nothing's wrong.

This ultra-leniency is bad news for passengers. Leaving dire performance to go unpunished gives train companies like FGW even more leeway to fatten profits by cutting costs, knowing their franchise is safe whatever happens.

The fate of Wessex Trains since it transferred to FirstGroup is especially depressing. Once an average section of the rail network, it's now one of the worst, where passengers battle day after day with overcrowding, delays and cancellations. Two railways in Cornwall had their trains suspended last week as FGW floundered. "A shortage of serviceable trains" also caused FGW to pre-arrange cancellations in Bristol, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Lamentable train maintenance is one part of the problem. The other is a savage cut in the number of carriages FGW leases so that they can sit out of use in sidings – at the government's command.

P.S. Perhaps passengers shouldn't be surprised at the Wessex downturn. When the government awarded the "greater western" franchise (incorporating Wessex) to FirstGroup, the franchise with the worst punctuality in Britain was … First Great Western.

'Dr B Ching'

EYE TOLD YOU SO

THE sentencing of former Barnsley College lecturer Stuart Spacey in February will bring to an end the saga of how the college was defrauded of £1m in the 1990s.

Back in June 1999, college principal David Eade was so infuriated he went to the Press Complaints Commission (without result) over *Eye* reports that the college was investigating a whistleblower's allegations about Progress Training, a company set up to run college franchise operations.

The college's internal investigation found the allegations "unsubstantiated". But in February 2001, *Eye* 1021 reported that the Further Education Funding Council had sent investigators to Barnsley to collect statements. By the summer, the bogus set-up was under investigation by South Yorkshire Police and the Serious Fraud Office.

Spacey, now 69, was the company secretary of Progress Training. He changed his plea to guilty in November, admitting to conspiring with David Eade to defraud Progress Training by obtaining payment for work or services rendered, knowing that no such work had been done or service provided. The case against Eade was previously discontinued on medical grounds. At the plea hearing, Spacey was warned to expect jail.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

WINTER'S TALE

AS THE *Eye* went to press Doncaster council was on the brink of an agreement that would see managing director Susan Law walk away from her job of two years with a payoff not unadjacent to £150,000, bringing the total bill for Mayor Martin Winter's botched attempt to have her sacked to more than half a million squids.

The abandoned "misconduct" case against Law (*Eyes passim*) – that she had upset the delicate Doncaster flowers with her "overbearing" antipodean manner – was described by the Association of Local Authority Chief Executives (Alace) as "somewhere between malicious and completely ridiculous". Part of the deal is that the Labour council concedes that, although a police investigation eventually came to nothing, she was justified in asking Knacker to investigate allegations of corruption at Winter's pet Glass Park regeneration project (*Eyes passim*), given the evidence presented to her. Such as the false receipt which indicated £5,000 had been paid to the "Foundation for Local Food Innitiatives" [*sic*] for "recruitment" advice – a selection process which resulted in one M. Winter bagging the post of project director. The Foundation actually received only £350. There was also the case of the signature on a grant application in the name of Glass Park chairman Martin Hilton which looked uncommonly like Winter's handwriting. It must have come about, according to Winter, because he had loaned Hilton his "mayor's fountain pen" for the occasion.

Both sides can now claim vindication. One big winner is Law. Another is Mark Greenburgh, former Tory leader of Buckinghamshire county council, now "head of local government" at solicitors Wragge and Co. He may have failed once more (see *Eyes passim*) to get a council chief exec ignominiously fired but he still gets paid big bucks, so what the hell? Winter looks pretty stupid, as ever, but he stays in his job. Only Doncaster's taxpayers are out of pocket. But who gives a toss about them?

● TORIES in Christchurch, Dorset, have set a useful precedent for political parties which accept handsome donations after giving developers planning permission for controversial schemes.

Shortly before Christmas the "chic" Captain's Club Hotel opened on the banks of the River Stour. Owners Platinum One Hotels Ltd were granted planning permission in 2003 and less than a year later made a £2,500 contribution towards a Christchurch Conservative Association event at the Commons.

The "hotel", on the site of a former Pontins holiday camp, was controversial because it consisted of luxury apartments, which some opponents described as actually "timeshare" units which would not replace the trade lost to the area when the holiday camp closed. The planning committee was tied three-all and permission was granted only after the committee's Tory chairman cast his vote in favour.

When the donation came to light last year Tory constituency agent Judy Jamieson told the local press: "It was a perfectly normal transaction… Planning is not political … if there had been any hint of politics then there would have been a problem." A sage conclusion, from which developers everywhere can take heart!

PS: The Tories have since cemented their relationship with the Captain's Club by deciding to hold the annual Mayor's Ball there next month.

HODSON'S CHOICE

MORE than 10,000 new homes are to be built in the Cambridgeshire fens over the next 14 years as part of the government's grand plan to concrete over rural England. Closely involved in the plans has been Tory Fenland district council's head of planning policy, Chris Hodson. "This is a very exciting time for Fenland, and we are very positive about the new growth to our district," he told local newspapers last year.

Having helped identify specific sites for possible development, Mr Hodson is now upping sticks to go and work for Allison Homes, a subsidiary of the giant Kier group, which is in line to build hundreds of those new houses, as "strategic land manager". Some locals smell a conflict of interest, but a council spokesman said there were no restrictions on council officers going to work in the private sector. The Nolan committee on standards on public life recommended that employment contracts should include restrictive covenants to prevent staff waltzing off and using their "privileged" inside knowledge and contacts for the advantage of new employers. This now applies to the handful of "chief" officers on every council, but not to less exalted but nevertheless senior staff such as Mr Hodson. In fact it was a tribute to the calibre of local government personnel, said Fenland's spokesman, if the private sector was "poaching people for their expertise". So that's all right, then.

TALKING WALLS

LAST August *Eye* 1164 reported how Peter Walls, chief executive of the Sunderland Housing Group (SHG), which bought the city's 36,000 council homes for £6,200 each five years ago, had succeeded in silencing a critical local website called Dadsplace. Walls obtained an injunction preventing Dadsplace publishing anything pending the outcome of a libel action by himself and others against the man behind it, I.T. worker John Baines, aka "Jack Pot". Last month in the High Court Mr Justice Eady struck out Baines's ill-prepared D.I.Y. defence to the defamation action after Baines had earlier failed in an application to have the injunction lifted. The case has already left Baines, who cannot afford legal representation, penniless, yet Walls seems determined to extract damages and costs. Meanwhile tens of thousands of pounds of SHG tenants' money has been spent by Walls on City law firm Olswangs, who have been sending letters threatening dire consequences and enormous costs against people who posted comments on Dadsplace – and, indeed, to others who did not and had nothing to do with the website, but are known to be critical of SHG. The effect has been to intimidate potential witnesses who could have helped Baines's defence and to mute criticism of SHG. Last week, after a shopkeeper saw a man tampering with his car, Baines discovered a radio tracking device attached to the underneath. Alas no one got the registration number of the white van in which the mystery man was driven away.

● THE fate of the Thornborough Henges, a 5,500-year-old complex of archaeological remains known as the "Stonehenge of the North" (*Eye* 1127) hung in the balance as the *Eye* went to press. North Yorkshire county council (NYCC) planners were due to decide on Tuesday whether to grant Tarmac Northern permission to extract 1.1 million tonnes of sand and gravel from a neighbouring 31-hectare site at Ladybridge farm near Ripon. A previous application to take twice that amount was turned down last year – so Tarmac has resorted to destroying the ancient landscape in more digestible chunks. Officers have recommended approval of the new application. One clue is in the fate of a 10,000-signature petition against further quarrying submitted to NYCC in August 2005 – the most objections the council has ever received to a planning application. It suffered a complete ignoral, with many elected members remaining unaware of its existence.

"You want an admission? OK – I admit the school's crap"

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

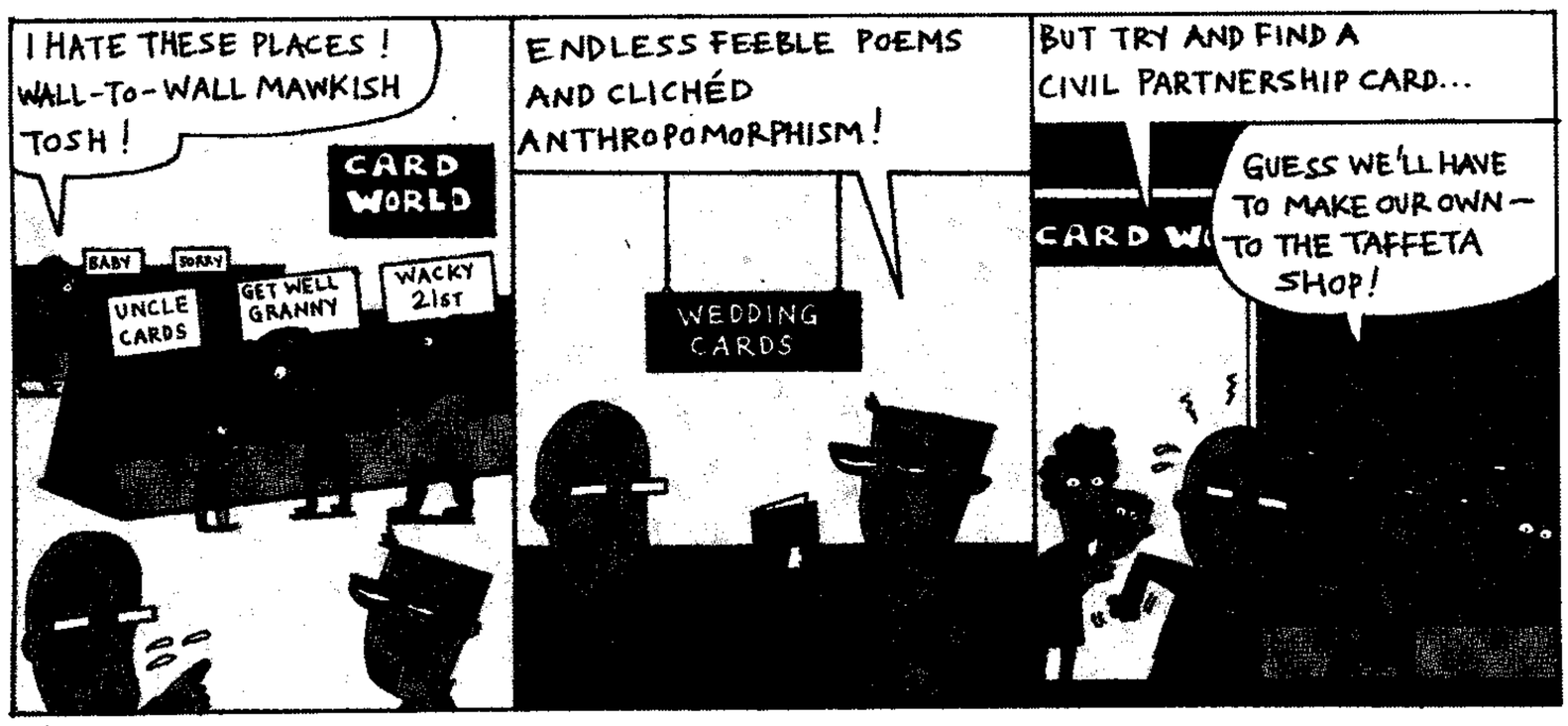
THE three acres of gardens and playing fields surrounding "East Court", the offices of East Grinstead town council's grade two listed HQ, were bought by the townspeople in memory of the their war dead.

Funds were raised through a community collection led by local benefactor and hospital boss Alfred Wagg, with the district council contributing a share. The grounds are now partly owned by Mid Sussex District Council, with the rest owned by the local War Memorial Company, formed in 1949 to "provide and maintain a memorial garden" and "provide a public park and playing field".

Not for much longer, nearby residents fear, as the War Memorial Company is keen to sell off the football pitch on its part of the land for housing. Developers Rydon Homes recently resubmitted an application to build 90 homes on the land, with the support of the company and East Grinstead Town Football Club, who play at the memorial ground. In a letter to the local paper, the company's chairman explained that selling off the land "is the only possible source of cash to improve East Court and upgrade football facilities". So much for grateful memory.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


I HATE THESE PLACES! WALL-TO-WALL MAWKISH TOSH!
CARD WORLD
BABY
SORRY
UNCLE CARDS
GET WELL GRANNY
WACKY 21ST
ENDLESS FEEBLE POEMS AND CLICHÉD ANTHROPOMORPHISM!
WEDDING CARDS
BUT TRY AND FIND A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP CARD...
GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE OUR OWN— TO THE TAFFETA SHOP!

NOOKS and CORNERS

IN THE last issue, I described the sad fate of Cumberlow Lodge in South Norwood, demolished last month by Fairview New Homes just after an English Heritage inspector got in touch to arrange a site visit to see if the Victorian house (given to the local community for use as a children's home) was listable.

It now emerges that this is not an isolated case of pre-emptive vandalism but something actively encouraged by a recent change in legislation. Responding to the government's concern for "transparency" in everything except its own behaviour, English Heritage announced in April 2005 that it would start notifying the owners of buildings that were being considered for listing. As no legal safeguards accompanied this change in policy, the consequences have been dire.

Here's another. Inglewood House at Kintbury in Berkshire is an ancient seat rebuilt in the early 19th century. Later it became a monastery and, in 1905, a chapel was re-erected there that had formerly stood at Westwood House near Wigan. This chapel, together with all its fittings and furniture, was designed by Edward Pugin, the architect son of the great Augustus Pugin. The monastery closed and the house became the Inglewood Health Hydro. It was sold just over a year ago for £5.5m through Knight Frank, which advertised it as a "Superb Country House Hotel development opportunity". The new owner, Audley Court Estates Ltd, specialises in upmarket retirement homes and has planning permission for 97 flats and houses in the grounds and hopes to convert the house itself into flats.

Photo: Peter Blacklock (Pugin Society)

But what of the chapel, which had remained intact despite these vicissitudes? The Pugin Society requested that it be spot-listed. English Heritage then notified the owner that it would like to see the chapel. But when the inspector arrived he found that the altar, reredos, carved panelling and stained glass had all been stripped out. His report stated that the chapel "would have been listable" had its lavish interior been intact; as it wasn't, it wasn't.

One might have thought the tenants of Audley Court Estates would have enjoyed having Edward Pugin's chapel on the premises to sit and muse in, but that is not really the point. The scandal is that the law is an ass, as notifying the owners of interesting buildings that they are being considered for listing is counter-productive and undermines the purpose of historic building legislation – to protect them for public benefit. As Ian Dungavell, director of the Victorian Society, puts it, "the loophole here is obvious. Any owner not wishing to be bound by listed building regulations is given ample opportunity to destroy the architectural significance of the building in question." The society is lobbying David Lammy, minister of culture, for this system to be changed. But I wouldn't hold out much hope: this government cares less about historic architecture and the environment than any since Macmillan's, and is busy rolling back all the conservation and planning achievements of the past half century.

MEANWHILE, English Heritage's strong recommendation that the former Newark Works of Stothert & Pitt in Bath be spot-listed is sitting on a desk at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The letter has been there since early October – ample time for someone to ensure the building is not listable. Fortunately, in this case, it is occupied by small businesses (I was wrong in Eye 1168 to say it is derelict: the former steam engine and crane factory is still serving a useful function – yet another reason why it should not be demolished), although Bath and North East Somerset Council is offering money to tenants to terminate their leases and clear out.

Readers will recall that the factory is an early work by Thomas Fuller, the Bath architect who designed the Canadian parliament buildings. Canadian historians want it protected: the factory is in the way of the proposed site of a £22m Dyson School of Design Innovation being promoted by Bath Council (which owns the building and ran it down) and the South West Regional Development Agency as part of the development of former industrial land by the Avon – despite the objections of the Environment Agency that the area is liable to flood. Something called Bath Spa University is also on board.

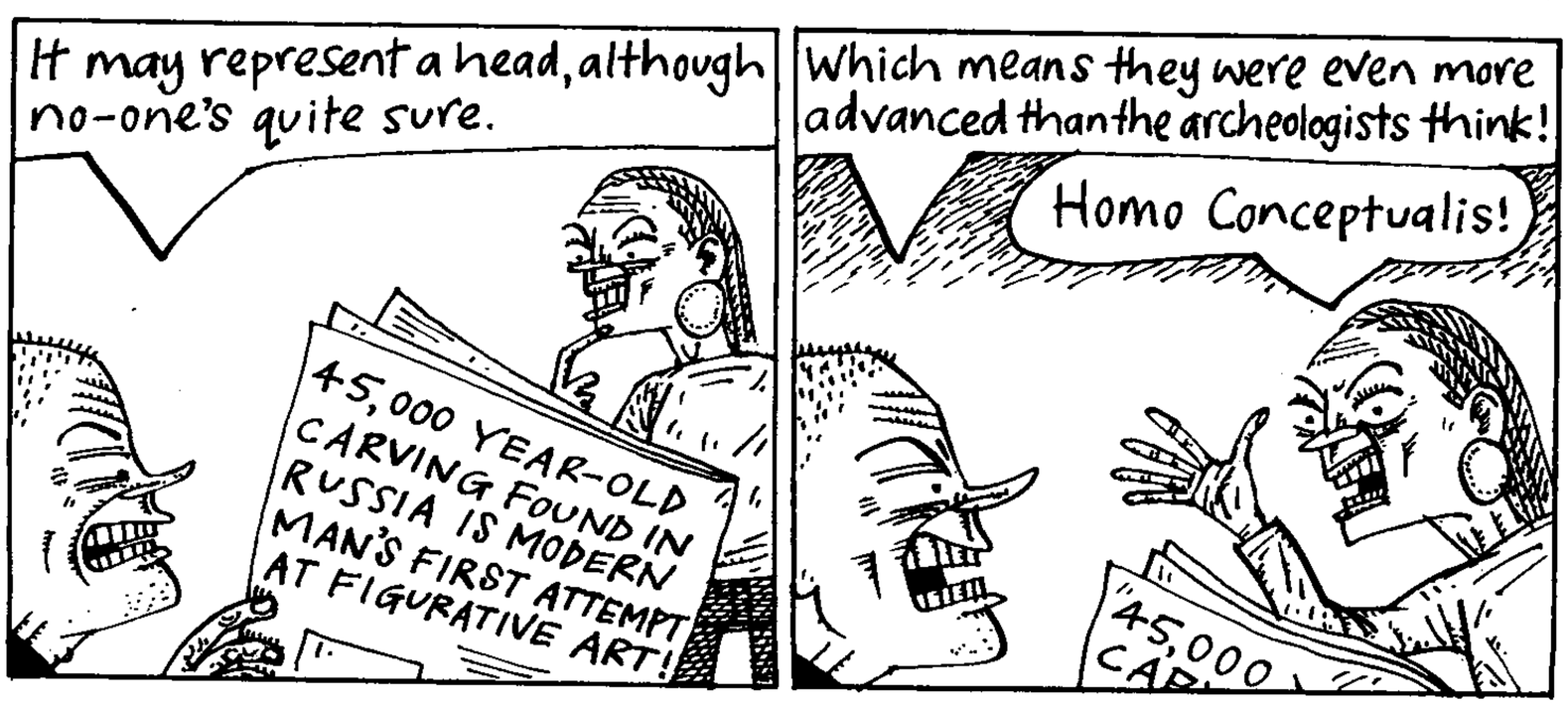
The man behind this city academy is, of course, the inventor and vacuum-cleaner tycoon, (Sir) James Dyson. His architects are the high tech firm Wilkinson Eyre, who seem either reluctant to or incapable of working with the existing industrial building, although a converted masonry structure might make a more interesting educational environment than relentless steel and glass. Wilkinson Eyre have proposed a compromise scheme retaining Fuller's façade, which seems a frivolous way to treat a tough and striking industrial building. It is not clear how serious a proposal this is.

Meanwhile Dyson has secured his knighthood. Presumably this honour is not for sacking most of his Malmesbury workforce and removing his manufacturing activities to Malaysia but for supporting one of his friend Tony's city academies. And that listing recommendation is still sitting at the DCMS. For how much longer, I wonder…

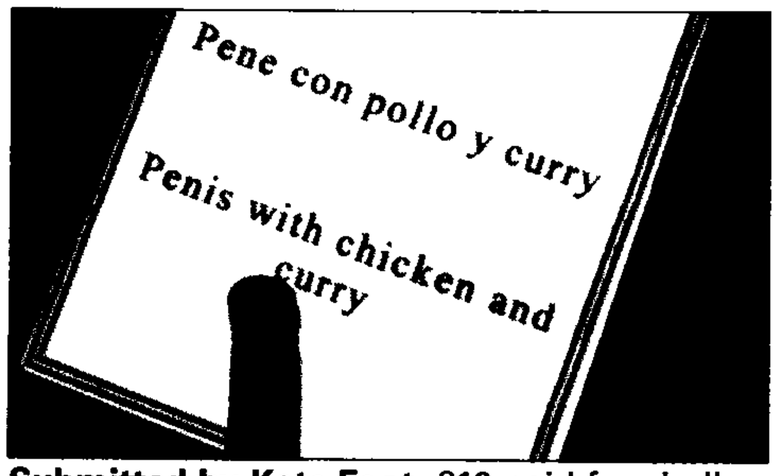
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


It may represent a head, although no-one's quite sure.
45,000 YEAR-OLD CARVING FOUND IN RUSSIA IS MODERN MAN'S FIRST ATTEMPT AT FIGURATIVE ART!
Which means they were even more advanced than the archeologists think!
Homo Conceptualis!
45,000 CAD.

I-SPY *Hotel buffet, Mexico*



Submitted by Kate Foot. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

AN INTERESTING one to watch in British music through 2007 might be the cloistered world of Oxbridge choral singing, which is poised to become a lot less cloistered than some of its members feel they can tolerate.

There's talk of revolution in the senior common rooms. And it began last autumn when Trinity Cambridge broke ranks with the appointment of its new, high-profile music director Stephen Layton.

For decades there has been a settled hierarchy in the Cambridge choirs, with the all-male King's and John's at the top, followed by the mixed-voice Clare and Trinity on honourably lower rungs. But things have been upset by the increasing difficulty of finding good choral and organ scholars. Church music isn't exactly a priority in schools these days, so 18-year-olds haven't been flooding forward with the necessary skills, and the competition to attract the best has been getting hot. Some would say dirty.

Last year Trinity decided to seize an initiative on the retirement of its longstanding music director Richard Marlowe. It advertised his position, rejected all the applicants, and went over their heads to make a private deal with Mr Layton – in a coup brazenly calculated to upturn the Cambridge choral pecking order. Layton is the current superstar of British choral conductors: much-recorded, Grammy-nominated, responsible for big projects like ENO's staging of the St John Passion and John Tavener's seven-hour vigil at the Temple Church which later toured to New York's Lincoln Centre. In netting him, Trinity has dramatically raised the stakes of Cambridge chapel music. And to cash in on its acquisition, the college has bypassed time-honoured university procedures for attracting choral and organ scholars by placing flashy ads in magazines, Proms brochures and the like that effectively say: We've got Stephen Layton, why apply anywhere else?

"It's typical of Trinity," complained one music faculty member. "I don't know what they've paid to get Layton, but they're the richest college in Cambridge, they've always thought they could walk over everyone else, and the way they've disregarded the inter-collegiate rules with these advertisements – rules that exist by gentleman's agreement – has shocked the rest of us. Layton is a fine musician. But the manner of his introduction into Cambridge has been regrettable."

Meanwhile, things are hotting up elsewhere. John's has announced the premature departure of its music director David Hill (who has only been in the job for three years), leaving Cambridge waiting anxiously to see if the college will feel driven to follow Trinity's lead with a celebrity appointment from the concert world. And over in Oxford, Merton (another college on the lower rungs of the choral hierarchy) has done exactly as Trinity did by inviting the founder-conductor of the internationally famous Tallis Scholars, Peter Phillips, to run its music as from next year.

In the old days, colleges would jockey for position with appointments to the Master's Lodgings. Now it seems the chapel has become the testing ground – which may be to the good of Oxbridge singing, but with an attendant chorus of extremely put-out voices at High Table.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Feel-good factor

Sir,

Sir Andrew Green of Migrationwatch recently asserted that migrants bring almost nothing of value to the people of this country.

To disprove his claim, I wonder if you have in your files a picture of a couple of East European origin whose antics have brought mirth to millions?

Yours faithfully,
ALAN HAYMAN,

Via email.

Wind bag

Sir,

Were you a bit disappointed in not being able to have your usual whinge at defence honours? (Eye 1175 p5) Perhaps Dyson was a bit of a weak target. Just because the unions were angered by Dyson's decision to shift manufacturing jobs to the far east, it doesn't make the move wrong. It actually ensured that hundreds of top class engineers remained in Malmesbury developing innovative products. Unfortunately, outsourcing is a fact of life in our global economy and we should praise what engineering remains in this country.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,
NICK CLARKE,

Via email.

Organ failure

Sir,

I have been trying to avoid seeing the pictures of Saddam Hussein being hanged. It's been hard, but I thought I had succeeded until I was scuppered while perusing my favourite organ.

I suppose you thought it was OK to print the picture because you were exposing the hypocrisy of other papers that printed it. As far as I am concerned, it wasn't.

Yours regretfully,
JEREMY POLMEAR,

Via email.

Fat of the band

Sir,

Shame on you for appearing to support the fatcat campaign to extend music copyright (Lunchtime O'Boulez, issue 1175) overwhelmingly for the benefit of the rich, at the price of preventing the reissue of historically and culturally important minority music which the commercially driven major record companies have no interest in but seek to make illegal.

Has anyone at Private Eye actually read the damning findings of the completely independent Gowers Review, which reported in December after a year's study with no axe to grind under former Financial Times editor Andrew Gowers? This review forensically demolishes all the self-serving arguments of the music industry establishment and should be recommended reading for anybody who wants to know the truth about the motives of the mentally negligible leaders (Cliff Richard, Paul McCartney, Bono, Mick Hucknall etc...) of this odious campaign.

Yours,
NEIL KELLAS,

Greenwich SE10.

Arse from elbow

Sir,

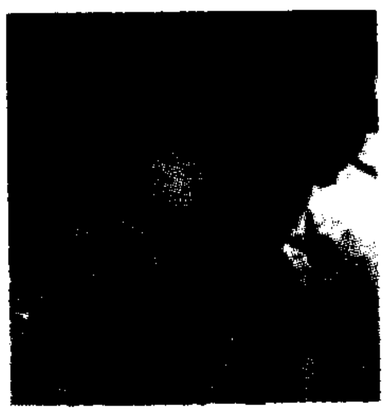
So Dr Howard Stoate loves "Choose & Book" (Eye 1175). Well, to quote Mandy Rice-Davis, "Well he would say that, wouldn't he?" He's a Labour MP, he's hardly going to say it's crap! Even though many of his GP colleagues say exactly that. What I am interested in is how does a full-time Member of Parliament work as a part-time general practitioner and get to use "Choose & Book"? How does he cover his out-of-hours work while an MP?

My experience of "Choose & Book" can be summed up from the opening line from one of my letters to a GP – "Many thanks for referring this gentleman with a painful wrist to my Hip & Knee clinic!"

JOHN WOOD BSc MBBS FRCSEd FRCS(Tre&Orth) FEBOT (Consultant Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgeon),

London SE13.

Lookalike



Orc

Jackiey

Sir,

After her intimidating behaviour in the Big Brother house, are we to assume that Jackiey Budden, the reality TV "star" and mother of Jade Goody, is the prototype of a terrifying super-race bred to take over Middle England?

I think Gandalf should be told.

Yours,
ALI LISTER,

Via email.

Crock of gold

Sir,

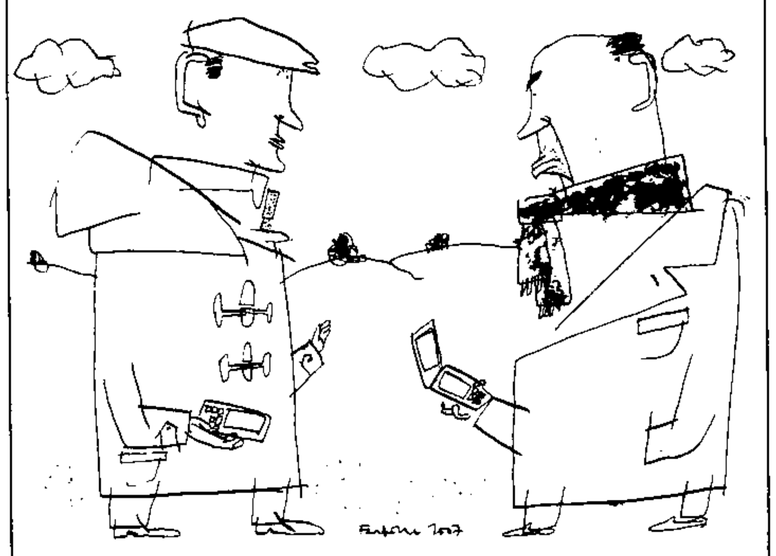
There are valid criticisms about the Government's proposed pension scheme, but those in Eye 1174 don't hold water. Prices of shares go up and down in the short term, but over a typical working life of 30-50 years the returns are pretty reliable. What the government suggests we do is more like a bookie (certainty over a long period but swings and roundabouts on the way) than his punters in the front (bound to lose in the end, but a small possibility of a big win). "For this to work, share prices will have to rise exponentially for generations", you say. That's exactly what they have done: so where's the gamble?

The suggestion that workers should deliberately refuse to save for their retirement because they will then become entitled to means-tested benefits beggars belief. The welfare state is to help those who fall on hard times because of misfortune, not spendthrifts or schemers. Isn't it?

Yours faithfully,
PETER GILMOUR,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"It doesn't matter where I am, my mobile works perfectly"

O·B·N

Which living person do you most admire and why?

Tony Blair, for living so publicly with the knowledge that he's not perfect.

JEREMY IRONS
Guardian Weekend Magazine

Submitted by David A. Smith

Prat-a-portal

Sir,

In your remarks about Talkback Thames' new series of The Apprentice you speculate that the application page is still open months after the official closing date for entries because Talkback is struggling to recruit enough candidates to appear on the show. I doubt this - there are more than enough wallies in the country desperate to appear on television to fulfil any brief no matter how ridiculous.

The more likely explanation is that Talkback have cynically left the page live to encourage interest in the show in a spirit of accessibility, interactive openness and all that guff. The ultra-wallies still applying are probably having their apps DOA'd (deleted on arrival) and their futile attempts to gain the opportunity to make prats of themselves on national TV are doomed the instant they press send.

Yours etc,
MARTIN KENNEDY,

Via email.

Gong pong

Sir,

Your New Year's Honours piece omitted a particularly deserving recipient of the OBE, the GMB's Deputy General Secretary, Debbie Coulter, who got her gong for services to industrial relations.

By her own admission, Ms Coulter organised collections from employers to help her friend and mentor Kevin Curran rig the Union's election to get himself appointed General Secretary and deliver a large amount of its members' money to the Labour Party. Once in post, he failed to deliver and was subsequently forced to fall on his sword when the swindle was uncovered by a former ally blowing the whistle at an Employment Tribunal in Manchester.

It seems that Downing Street has not forgotten the sterling attempt to neuter the GMB by Ms Coulter who, surprisingly, still holds office despite having not retained one iota of credibility.

Yours faithfully,
JOSEPH KING,

London SW18.

"He says he's a dangerous chocoholic and he demands to be prescribed KitKat"

Lookalike

Condoleezza

Klingon

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the startling resemblance between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and a Klingon. Could they by any chance be related?

PAMELA GUYATT

Via email.

Casualties of defence

Sir,

Well done Robert Downie, for deliberately mis-interpreting the point of Dr Summers' assertion that "The Jewish State does not attack those who believe in the divinity of Christ".

Which any reasonable person would have read to mean, "The Jewish State does not attack those who believe in the divinity of Christ, because of that belief."

In fact, the State of Israel does not attack anyone for their religious beliefs, but in fact it ***is*** *true that while Israel doesn't attack Christians as such, as innocent bystanders, they regrettably* ***do*** *get hurt and killed, when Israel exercises its right and duty to defend its citizens from the vicious attack from the surrounding Muslim states, attacks that started within hours of that state being born and still continue.*

STEVAN HEZSELTINE,

Via email.

● (That's enough of this correspondence. Thanks. Ed.)

SOLUTIONS

"LA Fitness: a full range of corporate health solutions" – *gym membership*

"Jonathan Lee: Solutions Through Understanding" – *recruitment agency*

"The DellTM LatitudeTM 100L: an ideal mobile notebook solution" – *laptop computer*

"Looking for the best way-finding solutions? You need Vista System!" – *signposts*

"Archaeological Solutions (formerly the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust)" – *archaeologists*

"Ann Summers Clever Lingerie Solutions" – *bras*

All submitted by readers

Assisting engorgement

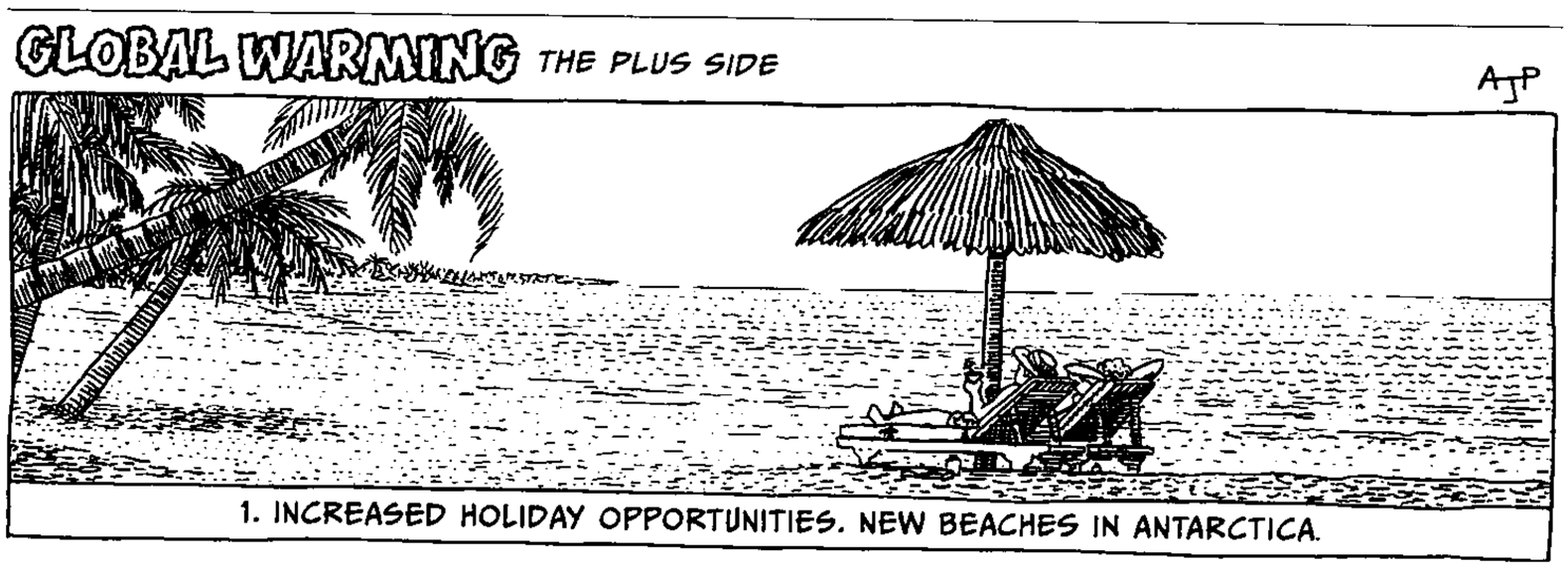
Sir

As a keen "vampyrologist" I thoroughly enjoyed BBC One's adaptation of the Dracula legend, screened during the festive period.

I am especially fascinated by stories of blood-sucking female vampires from the Transylvanian region of Romania, and wondered if you had any pictures of such creatures, about to prey on a gormless, unsuspecting male victim.

Yours,
GEORGE SHEPHERD,

Poole.



Notes & Queries

Sir,

John Prescott was admitted to hospital over Christmas suffering from kidney stones not gallstones ('Prescott Shock', Eye 1175). Speaking from experience, if you're going to get stoned over the festive season it's certainly better to avoid the former.

Yours faithfully,
PETER BARNES,

Milton Keynes.

Sir,

Upon seeing the Eye's mention of the New Year's Honours List, I was surprised to find that a posthumous award had been given to one "Lord Orchid of Aintree".

In fact, Dessy's greatest triumphs came in the King George VI Steeplechase, which actually takes place at Kempton. Also of note was his victory in the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

Desert Orchid probably did compete over Aintree's Mildmay course from time to time, but he certainly never took part in any race involving the National fences, let alone the Grand National itself. He was much too important a horse for that.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD P.C. PLOWDEN,

London W2.

Sir,

Amusing as it is, Sioux Bradshaw's 3rd caption in the cartoon strip (How To Be A Famous Artist, Eye 1175) should perhaps have read "Drink Bass" rather than "Drink Absinthe".

The illustration depicts Edouard Manet's "A Bar at the Folies Bergere" (1882), and, if you look closely at the original painting, it clearly shows at least two bottles of Bass beer on the bar with the famous red triangle logo on the labels. This is thought to possibly be an early form of pictorial (disguised within art) advertising for Bass beer.

Perhaps your cartoonist should have depicted instead Edgar Degas's familiar "Absinthe (in a Cafe)" (1876), which shows a rather forlorn young lady alone at a bar table.

Yours sincerely,
BRIAN LEEDHAM,

West Ewell, Surrey.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It was a defensive mistake for their goal and it's often goals which decide games."
JIMMY CALDERWOOD, BBC Ceefax
(Tony Hamilton)

"These cyclists are playing chess with each other. They are shuffling the cards even as we speak..."
Commentator, World Cycling Championships
(K. Tilly)

"Riordan can score without a left or a right foot."
ARCHIE McPHERSON, STV Scotsport
(Tony Hamilton)

"I think he was lucky not to be sent off as I've seen players sent off for worse than that."
PETER REID
(Vin Welch)

"5-0 is, in fact, a better result for us than the 4-1 on the last tour here."
DUNCAN FLETCHER, Sky Sports News
(Tim Woolford)

"The way England capitulated yesterday, it was as if they had given up."
GEOFFREY BOYCOTT, Daily Telegraph
(Leslie Rose)

Letter from **Mogadishu**

from Our Own Correspondent

THERE is nothing like accurate – or inaccurate – US air strikes to make headlines. For a start, it's always difficult to know who's being targeted.

For years the US has been after the al-Qaeda operatives behind the 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Washington claims the men have been hiding in the Somali capital. And the US got an opportunity to go after them when leaders of the Islamic Courts Union were expelled from Mogadishu at the end of December.

A push by the Ethiopian and government militaries forced the ICU towards the Kenyan border or the sea. When Kenya closed its border, the US sent an aircraft carrier, two missile cruisers and even an amphibious assault craft in readiness. All talk of this being their first involvement in Somalia since 1993 is a joke. The US has been offering bribes for the handover of al-Qaeda operatives for years. More recently, it poured money into the coffers of warlords who opposed the ICU.

Our western friends seem surprised by the rapid collapse of the ICU. It took just two days in December for Ethiopian troops and our TFG (Transitional Federal Government) militia to smash an ICU attack on Baidoa. Within a week they were in Mogadishu and the ICU leaders had fled.

Perhaps you believed your own reports about the "powerful" ICU and the "weak and feeble" TFG. You are still claiming that the remnants of the ICU can call on powerful jihadist and Salafi support. Yet the defeat of the ICU wasn't a surprise to us. They had what visiting journalists repeatedly called a "peace dividend" when they defeated the warlords in June. But Sharia law's one thing, executions for watching a world cup video are another.

A "mistake", said Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who proclaimed himself head of the 93-member ICU Shura council in June last year. He chose the members himself, of course, and even allowed them to meet a couple of times. The Courts banned western music, clothes and hair styles. They stopped women swimming, and banned chewing *qat* (ICU members in the trade saw profits jump as prices rose by 600 percent). One Courts chairman threatened to chop the heads off anyone who didn't pray five times a day. It wasn't hard to believe when you saw Sheikh Aden Hashi Ayro passing by in a black-flagged jeep with a group of his Shebaab youth corps. Al-Shebaab were responsible for some 250 assassinations in Mogadishu in the past three years. Sheikh Ayro, Sheikh Aweys's protégé, learned his fighting in Afghanistan. It showed.

We don't much like Ethiopians, but we'd rather have them any day than al-Shebaab and Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys with his self-proclaimed "popular Islamic revolution". Most of the ICU weren't keen on this either, but it came in handy for a while to back up the political claims of the Hawiye clan, and of the Ayr/Habr Gidir.

That's what this fighting is really about: a power struggle between the Hawiye and Darod clans that has been going on for over 45 years. The TFG president, Colonel Abdullai Yusuf is Darod, but both the prime minister Ali Mohammed Gedi, about 50, and the deputy prime minister Hussein Aydeed, 36, are Hawiye from the main sub-clans Abgal and Habr Gidir respectively; neither are Ayr, which is the clan of both Sheikh Aweys and Sheikh Ayro.

As soon as the ICU was defeated, Hawiye clan elders withdrew their support and militias. These fighters make up most of the alleged 3,500 Islamist guerrillas that western journalists say are preparing for a guerrilla war. Mogadishu may still become ungovernable but it will be because of clan conflict, not mythical Islamist guerrillas.

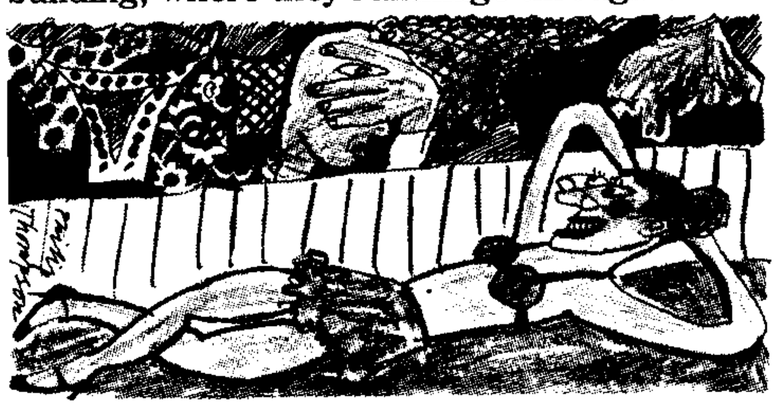
P.S. We've been a successful failed state for several years now, with the cheapest telephone calls in the world and a first class Hawala banking system. We may be able to put things right, but what we need are resources, an international force, and reconciliation talks. The last of these we must do on our own, but we need your help for the other two. And if we don't get it, we'll be back to square one.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "When I first began studying the phenomenon of naughty panty thieving, about twenty years ago, it was a simple and innocent pastime," academic Yukio Murakami told reporters in Tokyo. "Collectors relied on old-fashioned devices like a hook at the end of a fishing pole, or gardener's long-handled pruning shears to snare the flimsy feminine items from apartment verandas or house backyards, and run away with them. Some naughty panty collectors stole hundreds of pairs over many years, and when one thief's apartment was raided last year, police found 2,500 articles of female underwear in one small room, with naughty stolen panties even used to stuff a mattress. But as I say, it was an innocent enough hobby.

"However, panty thieves in recent years have become much bolder and more assertive in their modus operandi. Instead of relying on opportunist thefts, they have begun picking door locks or breaking windows to enter a building, where they rummage through chests



of drawers and laundry hampers in pursuit of their trophies. And they go to the trouble of getting a good look at their victims beforehand, to make sure the owner of the underwear is attractive, and not some frumpish old lady.

"Worse still, some thieves have begun filming themselves in the act of stealing the panties, and selling the DVDs on the market. They use a video camera to record the entire panty-hunting expedition, so they can flaunt their 'treasures' to fellow fetishists. What is most worrying is that these videos may encourage viewers to think 'I can do that too,' and lead to a wave of copycat stunts. Frankly, I think these break-in artists should be locked up, the sooner the better. They're spoiling the hobby for the old timers." *(The Japan Times, 22/10/06. Spotter: Alun Simpson)*

– ● –

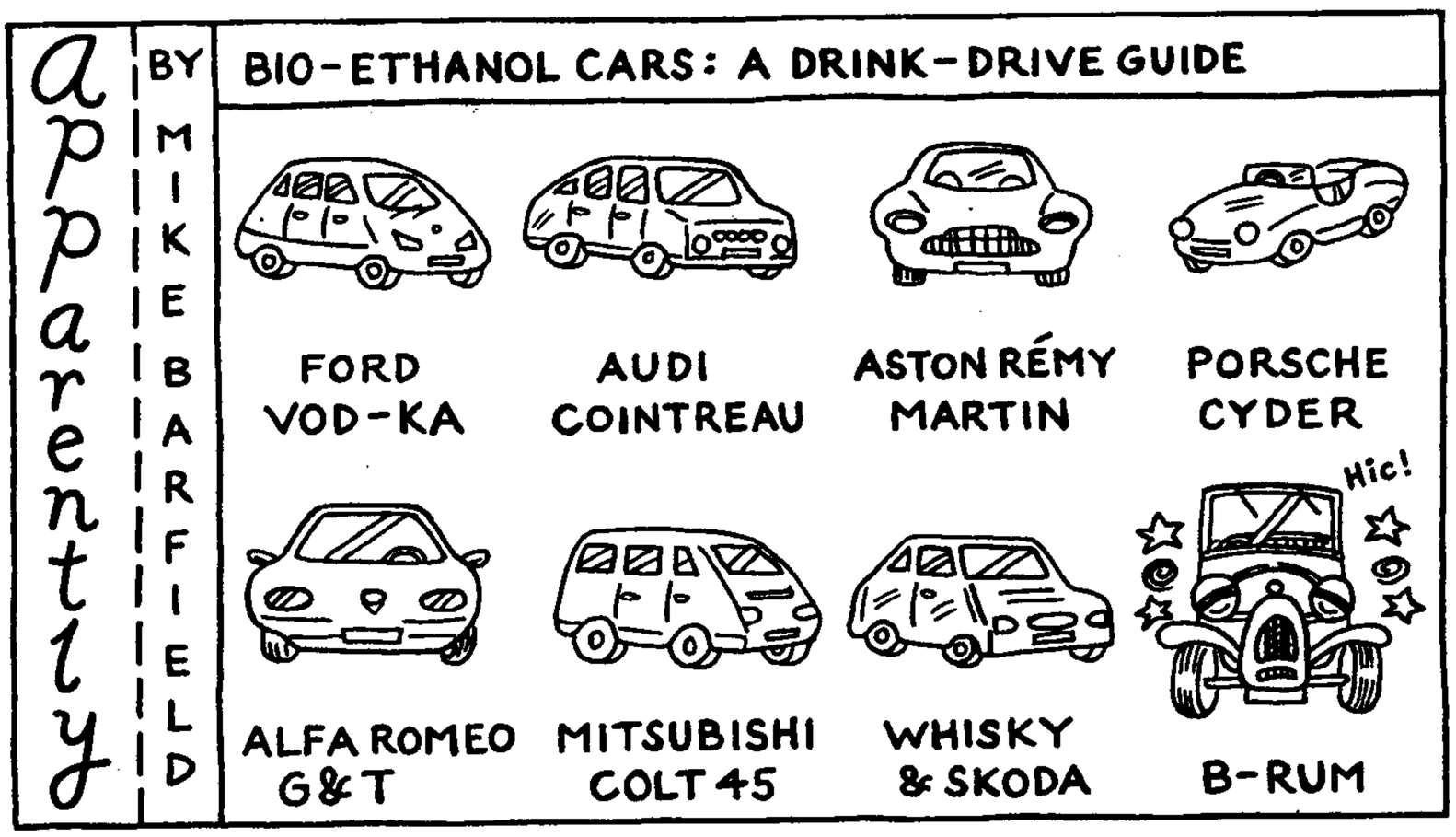
● *Dear Foreign Correspondent, On behalf of the Chairman and members of the Organising Committee for the Inauguration of World Toilet Association (Committee), I would like to invite you to a tour of toilets in Suwon and in particular Hwaseong, a beautiful cultural heritage site located in Suwon. Suwon City and its former mayor, Jae-duck Sim, have been at the forefront of improving public toilets in Korea in the past two decades.*

Since the inauguration of Korea Toilet Association in 1999, the 'toilet movement' in Korea has become an international movement. Now, as part of our efforts to promote the upcoming inauguration of the World Toilet Association, I would like to invite you, foreign correspondents in Korea, to come and see for yourself what public toilet can mean! I hope you will join us in the first tour of public toilets for foreign correspondents in Korea. To participate, please send enclosed RSVP. Sincerely, Sook-lyol Lu. (The Organising Committee for the Inauguration of World Toilet Association, October 2006. Spotter: George Howell)

– ● –

● "The job of tax collection has always been a problem," a spokesman for the Municipal Corporation told reporters in Patna (Bihar), "because our economy is mostly cash-based and informal. Government campaigns to increase tax receipts failed repeatedly, and the city urgently needed to raise more money, so we've developed a system that we finally think will work. We employ gangs of eunuchs, dressed in garish saris and caked in cheap make-up, to humiliate defaulters into paying up.

"It's simple. We pay castrated men, hermaphrodites, transsexuals, and low-grade drag artistes to stand outside the homes and shops of tax offenders, and shame them. The eunuchs are accustomed to asking for money, because they spend their whole lifetime begging, and they never get bored or distracted. Accompanied by drummers, they loudly shriek slogans such as 'your reputation will be tarnished, fame would be malice,' then chant 'pay up the tax, pay up the tax' in front of family and neighbours, for days on end if necessary. Most civilised defaulters are ashamed to find noisy and flamboyant eunuchs on their doorstep, so they pay up quickly. In just one day this week, the eunuchs collected 400,000 rupees, which is more than we usually collect in an entire week. Once the money is in, they take a four-per-cent cut, and we keep the rest, so everybody wins." *(New Straits Times [Malaysia], 7/11/06. Spotter: Jeff Dover)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

An Important Announcement

The Vicar wishes it to be known that there will be a shorter Parish Newsletter this week as part of his policy to reduce his carbon footprint.

During his recent hard-earned writing holiday on the island of Biji (which he cut short to a mere 10 days in order to sort out the problem with Our Mission to Northern Ireland, St Gerry's and St Ian's), the Vicar was unfairly criticised for having been responsible for 72,000 tons of CO_2 emissions from his flights to and from important oecumenical holiday centres.

In order to compensate, he has been advised by Mr Milliband, our new Parish Climate Change Co-ordinator, that he should either plant 2,568 new trees or should cut the length of this newsletter in order to save felling the 4,612 trees which would otherwise be spared.

The Vicar therefore has a very short message this week relating to the following topics:

1. It was quite wrong for certain members of the PCC (Mr Prescott and Mr Brown will know who I am talking about) to issue hasty statements on the scenes surrounding the recent execution of Mr Hussein (the Evil One).

It's all too easy to rush to judgement and use words like "deplorable" about such matters. What we should always try to do on such occasions is to count to ten, hold our breath, and give very careful consideration to the right word to use in this context.

That is the course I chose myself, and after thinking very long and hard for a whole week, I finally concluded that the most appropriate word to use in describing these scenes was "deplorable".

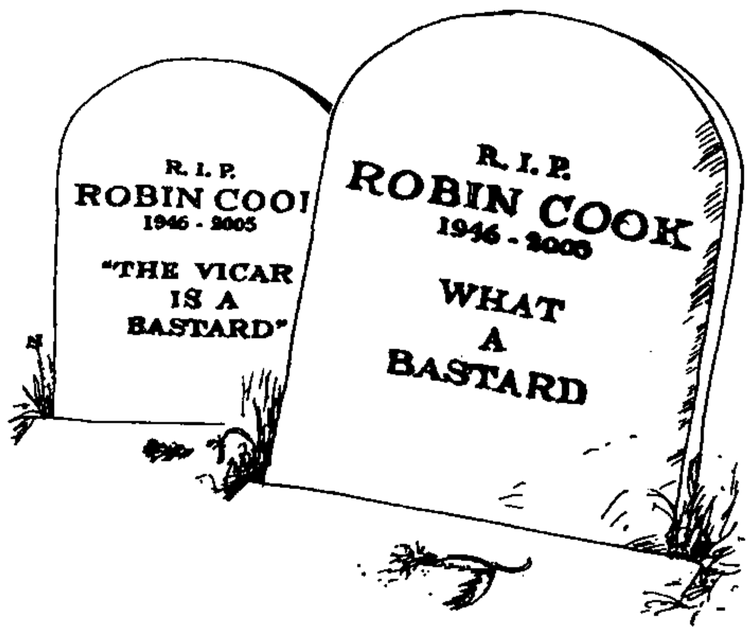
I hope this will be an end to the matter.

2. The Vicar would like to remind parishioners and their families that there are very strict regulations about the wording of inscriptions which may be placed on gravestones in the churchyard.

In describing deceased persons, certain phrases are perfectly acceptable, such as "A dear and loyal friend of the Vicar" or "He agreed with the Vicar to the end".

Other phrases of a more contentious nature, however, are clearly unacceptable, such as that which has recently appeared on the headstone of our late organist, Mr Cook, which read "The Vicar is a bastard". This is neither clever nor funny and I have instructed our local stonemason Mr de la Nougerede to alter the wording to something more appropriate.

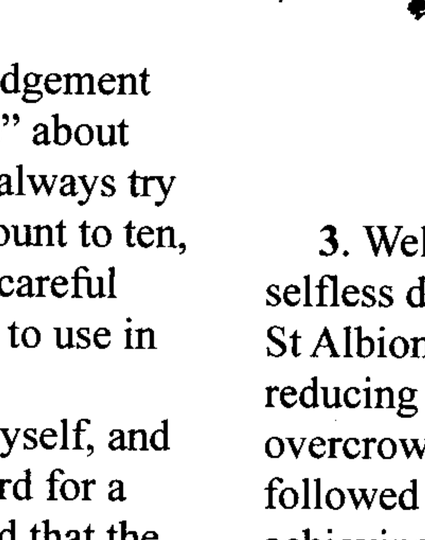
A preliminary sketch, which has been unanimously approved by me on behalf of the PCC, appears below:



3. Well done to Mrs Kelly for her selfless decision to take her son out of the St Albion's Primary School to assist in reducing class sizes and relieving the overcrowding problem which has followed the success of the school in achieving a 110 percent record in Key Stage 94 (Maths and English excepted).

T.B.

Mrs Jowell's Gambling Den



Mrs Jowell invites everyone to a fun family night out as an introduction to the joys of responsible gambling.

"This is an increasingly popular leisure pursuit," says Mrs Jowell, "and we should all take advantage of the new supercasino in the crypt."

Mrs J. will be running a beginners' course in the following:

- Roulette
- Texas Hold 'Em
- Black Jack
- Chemin de Fer and
- Highstakes on-line Spread Betting

Open 24/7! All welcome!

Come along and lose your money fast!

Faltes Vos Jowell!!

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0800 hrs

Station reopened following seasonal Eid rest period. On completion of 'Operation Check The Answerphone', PC Stanmore reported that a message had been received from legal representatives of various murderers, rapists, drug dealers, paedophiles etc following their premature self-release from Dollis Hill Open Prison. Quoting Article 94 of the European Convention of Human Rights, the lawyers had pointed out that display of photographic or other imagery identifying their clients (i.e. "Wanted" posters saying "Have you seen this man? Do not approach, he is highly dangerous") constituted a prima facie breach of their human rights. All officers were immediately dispatched to designated poster-points under 'Operation Broadsword' to ensure the removal of all offending material as soon as possible.

A number of members of the public were apprehended while blatantly looking at the posters, thus mentally discriminating against the owners of the images. Twelve of these persons were arrested under the Public Order Act 1986 and other legislation for passing such comments as "He looks like a killer, doesn't he?", "He's got funny eyes," and "I wouldn't like **him** hanging round the school gates", and were charged with hate-crimes.

One suspect was unfortunately shot while resisting arrest and several others injured themselves while being assisted into the back of the police van.

1115 hrs

On returning to the station, officers were informed that one of the murderers depicted on the posters, a Mr X, had killed seven persons in an attempt to rob the Thresher's retail outlet in the Fatima Whitbread shopping precinct. The Armed Response Unit, under Sergeant Greenford, was detailed to track down and arrest Suspect X, but officers were instructed that they were on no account to look at the poster carrying his image in case this should be of unfair assistance in apprehending him.

YES, IT'S BLUBYA BUSH

President Weeps For Latest War Casualty

by Our Man In The White House **Lunchtime O'nion**

A PLAINLY emotional President Bush yesterday failed to hold back the tears as he learnt that the war in Iraq had claimed yet another victim.

The normally cheerful Bush broke down and wept as he paid tribute to "a man who gave his political life in the service of himself".

Basil Bush

Said the late President, "The death of my career is a tragic blow to our great nation and has saddened me deeply".

Whilst the flag was lowered and the Band of the 178th Guantanamo Torture Corps struck up *'Poor George Is Dead'* (from the ex-President's favourite musical *'Oklahomaland'*), Condoleezza Rice added her tribute.

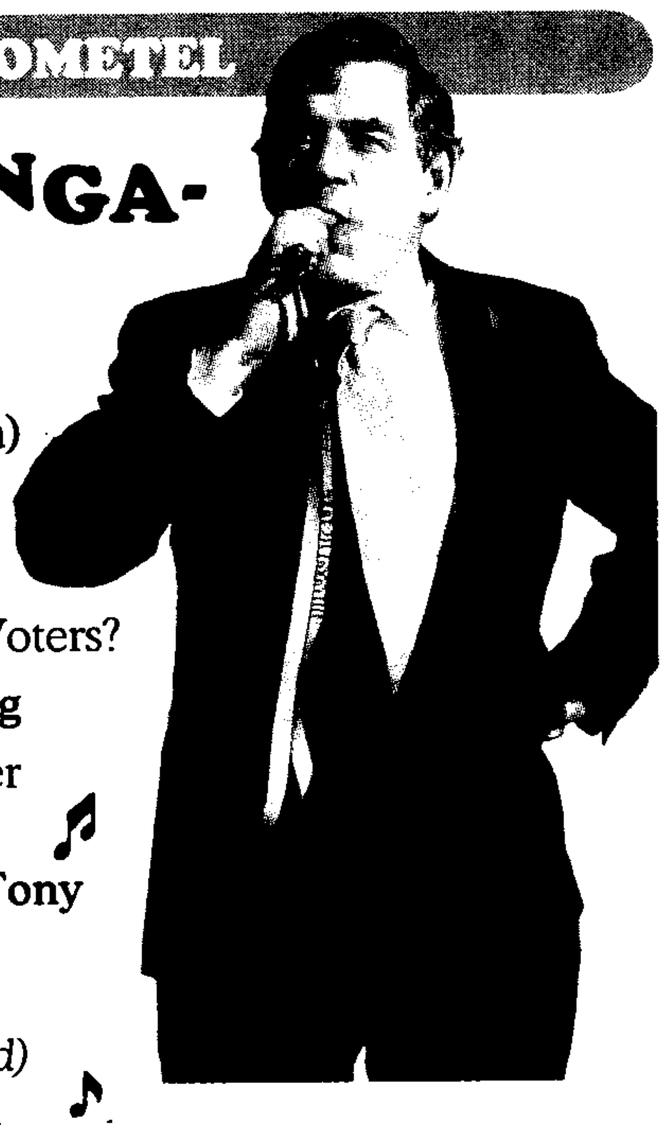
Boom! Boom!

"This is a momentous day," she said. "George Bush has become the 3000th least popular American President in history."

Dr Rice also offered her condoleezzances to the President's wife and family. Said a delighted Mrs Laura Bush, "I am still finding it hard to come to terms with the fact that poor George is not all there."

NEW FROM GNOMETEL

SING-A-LONGA-GORDIE



I Belong To Britain (Dear Old Britain Town)

Britain the Brave

Brits Wha' Hae

Tony, Where's Yer Voters?

The Sky Plus Voting Song

My Tonnie Lies Over and Over Again

Will Ye Nae Piss Off Tony Blair?

Scottish Soldier *(Regiment Disbanded)*

...and many more

Don't miss this Kilt 'n' Sporran Karaoke Cockle Warmer from the Voice of the Highlands himself – Wee Gordie Broon and His Band O' Renoon!

REID FINDS CRIMINAL SHOCK

by Our Prison Staff **Lunchtime O'Noanotheronehasescaped**

THE beleaguered Home Secretary, Mr John Reid, was yesterday keen to point out his success in identifying a serious miscreant working at a very high level in the Home Office.

He told reporters, "I have discovered that Mr Scapegoat is the man responsible for allowing hundreds of murderers, rapists and paedophiles to roam the streets of Britain."

Mr Scapegoat is a junior civil servant in the Immigration & Paperclip Department of the Home Office. Colleagues describe him as "an excellent worker who just does what the Home Secretary told him".

Mr Reid, though, said, "Mr Scapegoat is a danger to everyone – particularly myself – and, to be honest, suspending is too good for him."

REID'S LATEST EXCUSE

SENIOR FIGURE ATTACKS 'IRRESPONSIBLE ARMY CUTS'

by Our Military Correspondent **Max Hustings**

SHORTAGE of equipment, lack of manpower, poor training facilities, inadequate accommodation, all were highlighted as yet another senior figure attacked the government for its failure to support the Armed Forces.

"I don't know who is reponsible," he said, "but it really isn't good enough. If we are going to put our troops into these situations then the least we can do is give them our 100 percent backing."

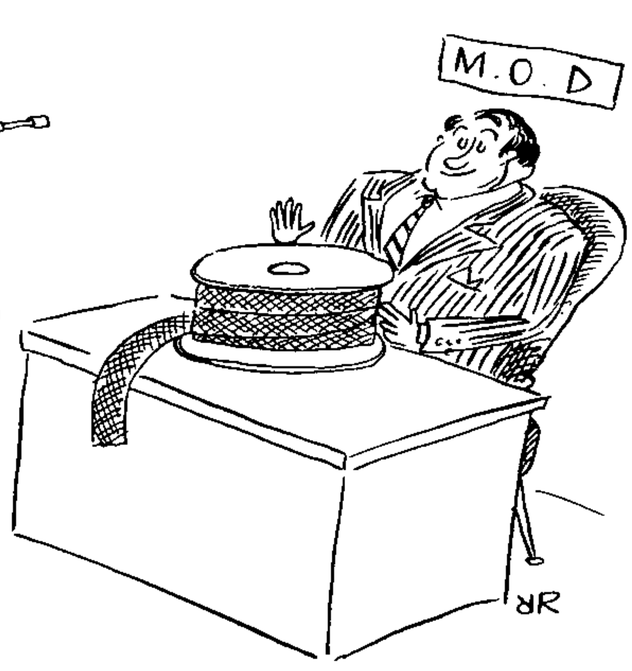
Tony Blair, one of the key figures at the top of the military command structure continued.

"No wonder that army morale is so low. No, there's no doubt as to who is to blame for this whole fiasco. It's the media."

Shoot the Messenger

"On a daily basis they produce damning evidence of government incompetence and hypocrisy. What message is that sending to our brave boys in Basra? They should stop and think about whether they are actually helping the enemy with these totally accurate and responsible reports."

Thin Red Line



Thick Red Tape

★ BAGHDAD EVENING NOOSE ★
Friday 19 January 2007 One goat (or fridge)

WORLD SHOCKED AS LEADER IS TAUNTED IN FINAL HOURS

by Our London Staff **Tariq 'Comical' Ali**

A WAVE of shock ran round the world last night as video pictures were released showing the indignities to which the much-hated British dictator was subjected as his end approached.

"It was utterly deplorable," said Nouri al-Maliki, the Prime Minister of Iraq. "It is profoundly disturbing to think that scenes like this could take place in a supposedly civilised country."

Other world leaders were quick to agree. President Ahmedinajacket of Iran said: "He may be an evil man who has done terrible things, but he is still a human being and for his opponents to taunt and humiliate him at this moment of his life is nothing short of barbarism."

A Saddam Sight

Grainy video footage shot with a mobile phone inside the House of Commons showed a dignified Blair refusing to comment on the death of President Hussein, while jeering MPs hurled insults at him such as, "Would the Rt Hon Gentleman the Prime Minister like to comment on recent events in Iraq, with particular reference to the execution of the late President of that unfortunate country?"

ON OTHER PAGES

❑Those Blair pictures that shocked the world **2-94**.

PLUS

❑ Download our exclusive video of the end of Blair from www.blairgone-eveningnoose.iq

PLUS

❑ Your Massacres Tonight – full guide to all the massacres scheduled to take place in Baghdad over the next 24 hours.

PLUS

❑ Curfew What A Scorcher!! The Baghdad Lovelies Who Daren't Come Out At Night

PLUS

❑ Tomorrow's weather: Sunni in places, Shi'ite in others.

WOMAN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS GIVEN PLACE IN CABINET

by Our Education Staff **Conrad Blackboard**

A YOUNG woman, described as having "severe education difficulties", has been given a £135,000 a year place in one of Britain's most exclusive Cabinets.

The woman, Ruth Kelly (who could not be named for legal reasons) found it very difficult to learn the simplest of lessons, and could not even read the Manifesto of her own party.

When she takes up her new post, she will be given one-to-one tuition by her teacher Mr Blair, who will instruct in exactly what to say and think on all matters, until she is word perfect.

Within a year or two she will find it just as easy to explain why she has sent her child to a private school as her colleague Mrs Harman, or even Mr Blair himself.

However, some members of the Labour Party last night expressed their fury at what they described as "unfair treatment for the elite".

Said one "There are hundreds of people who would love the chance to be in the Cabinet – and many of them have special needs, such as a huge salary, a large car and the chance of appearing on the Today programme."

MODEL OF TITANIC ENTERS GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS

by the late **Norris, Horace, Boris, Maurice** and **Doris McWhirter**

A PART-TIME amateur model maker, Dave Matchstick of Cleethorpes, has won a place in the Guinness Book of Records by constructing a larger-than-life size model of the Titanic entirely from unsold copies of David Blunkett's memoirs 'How I Bankrupted My Publishers'.

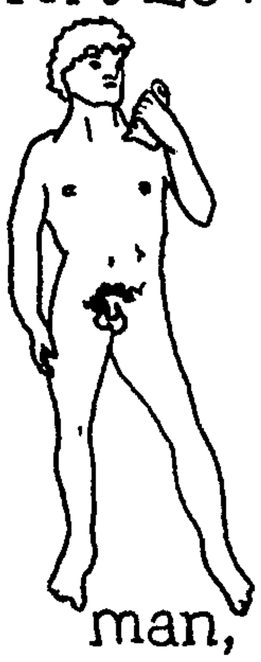
Mr Matchstick, 47, explained last night, "It has always been my dream to build a model of the Titanic four miles long, but until this year I could not find enough suitable material.

"But last summer I was walking my dog Kelvin past our local landfill site when I saw just what I had been looking for – thousands of tons of unwanted books in mint condition, just waiting to be turned into a replica of the tragically doomed liner."

Cheops Sticks

"Even so," the Cleethorpes modelling maestro went on, "by the time I had completed the last funnel, I still had tons of Mr Blunkett's diaries left over, enough to start work on my next project, the Pyramids of Ancient Egypt."

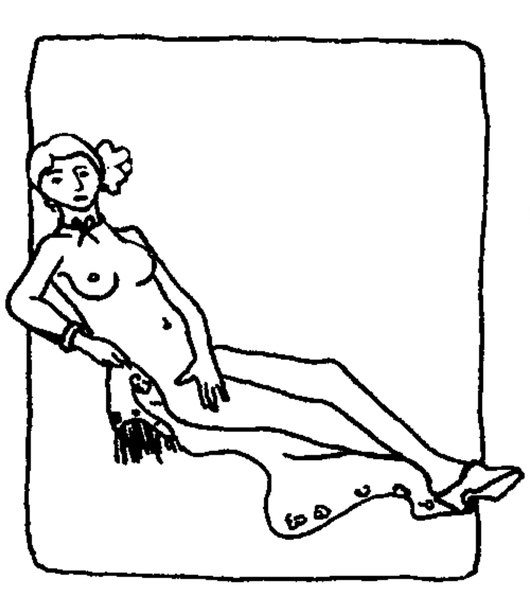
Art Lover seeks



man,

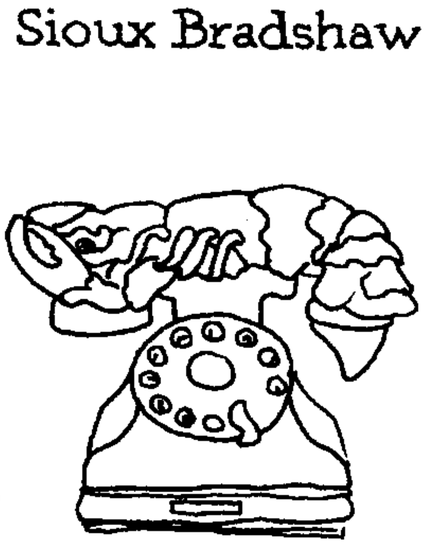
GSOH,

for friendship



and more

Sioux Bradshaw



Call 020 8604 4567

guardian

The problems of Dyslexia

More and more poeple find it hrad to matser the basics of raeding and rwiting.

A Grauniad survye revaeled that over 100 percent of its stffa are unabel to place lettres in the rihgt order. Siad one, a Mr Rubsridger:

"It is a commno preblom afflictngi middel class perants who want a good ecxuse to send theri chidlren to pravite scohols like all my staff at the Graunida." *(Cnot. p. 49)*

ENGLAND STAR OFF TO UNITED STATES

by Our Football Correspondents
Stanley Accrington and
Alexandra Crewe

THE WORLD of political football was this week left reeling at the news that ex-England captain Tony Blair has signed up to appear on the lucrative US circuit.

The future of Blair had been in doubt ever since he was dropped from the national team, and this latest move confirms that the gifted midfield schemer would not have been happy with merely a seat on the bench.

New L.A. Bore

The career of the man they call 'Loadofballs' has certainly had its ups and downs. The boy wonder who emerged in the '90s with his twisting, turning, crowd-pleasing style, forever popping up unexpectedly on the right wing, went on to enjoy huge domestic success, winning the Premiership by record points margins in 1997 and 2001, climaxing in the memorable Treble of 2005.

But recent results have been less impressive, especially in Europe, and a sleazy 'bung' scandal wrecked the title hopes of many

Dosh and Bucks

supporters. Following further humiliation after the disastrous international campaign in the WMD Cup, it was clearly time for Blair to go.

Many pundits feel that the shock move to the US has come at the insistence of Tony's wife Cherie, the former unpop perfomer known as Dosh. Famed for her trademark pout and love of the high life, Dosh will surely feel at home amid the glamour of L.A. and *(cont. p. 94)*

Mary Ann Bighead

I do most of my work in bed – unlike ordinary people who use a desk or an office. Aren't I clever? Did you know that the brilliant economist John Maynard Keynes also worked in bed? Great minds think alike! Especially when they are very clever.

Do you know where I went for my holidays? New Zealand. And guess what? You didn't.

Why does the mysogynist press in this country keep hounding women like Kate Middleton, Ruth Kelly and myself? Is it because we're cleverer than everyone else? Yes, it is.

© Mary Ann Bighead, The Times.

My eBay

d-is-for-david (128,000,000)

Items I'm Bidding On (1-4 of 4 items)

	Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐ **Men's cowboy boots, size 9, diamante, platinum-coated**	£9,999.00	£2.99	1
☐ **My first calculator – make numbers fun! – sturdy washable plastic**	£8.99	£2.99	1
☐ **Large wheelbarrow**	£15.99	£4.00	1
☐ **"Teach Yourself Spanish" CDs and textbooks – v. good cond.**	£15.00	£4.50	1

Items I'm Selling (1-3 of 3 items)

	Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐ **"Teach Yourself Spanish" CDs and textbooks – v. good cond.**	£15.00	£4.50	1
☐ **Iberian rustic furniture 'gabinete de los trofeos', as new, never used**	£25.00	£15.00	0
☐ **"Guide to the Galaxy" – DVD, with Patrick Moore (bought in error)**	£3.99	£2.00	0

Yoga Class. From 6.30pm-8pm at Friends Meeting House, Wish Road. Beginners welcome and mats provided. The cost is £4.30, call Christ on 07814

Eastbourne Gazette

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Magnus Magnusson, doyen of TV quizmasters

So. Farewell
Then Magnus
Magnusson.

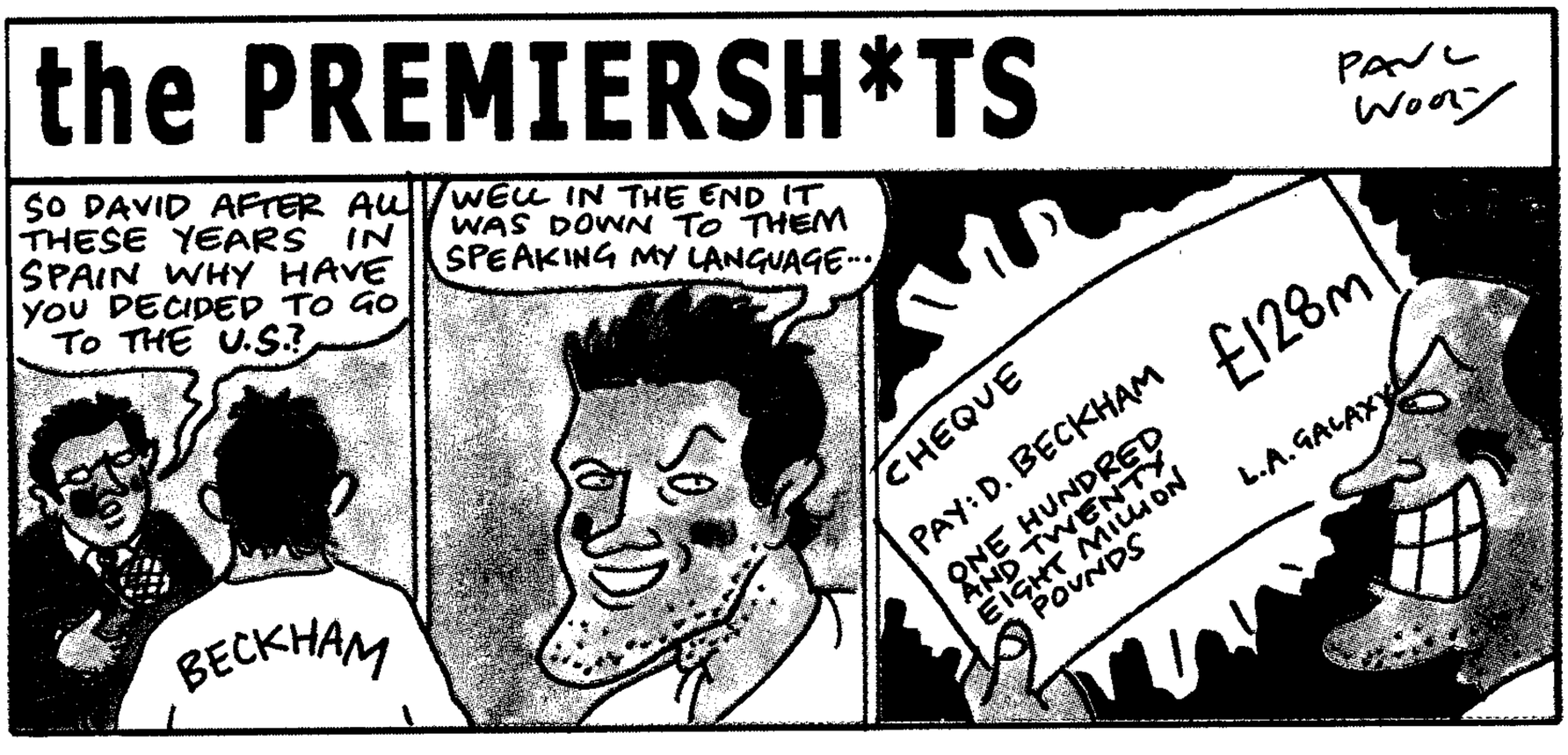
Famed inquisitor of
Mastermind.

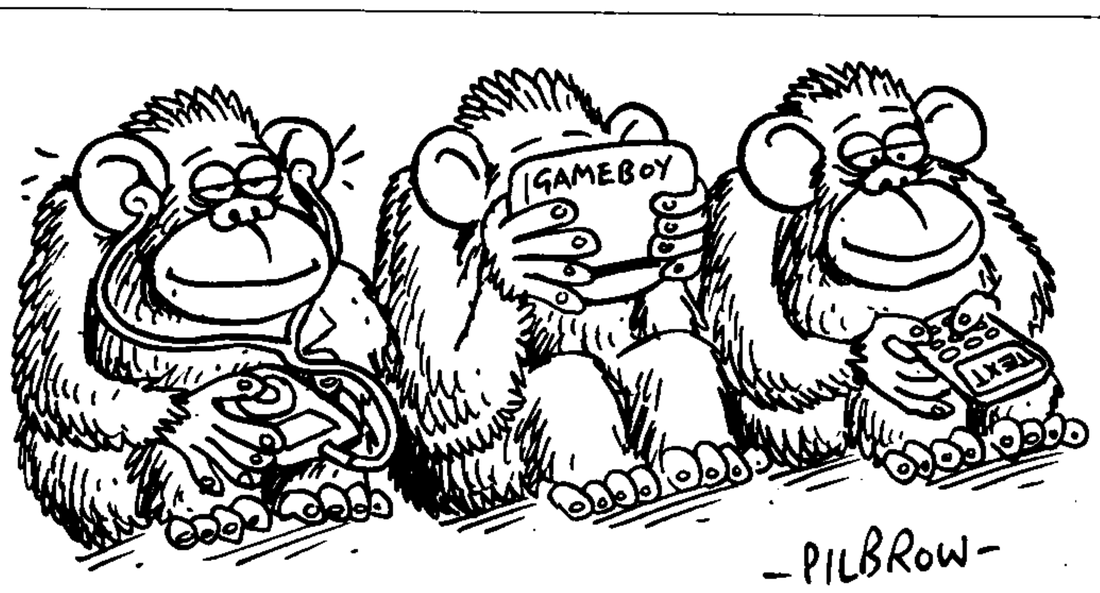
Your catchphrase was
"I've started so I'll
Finish."

And now
You have.

E.J. Thribb
(17½ and no passes)

the PREMIERSH*TS


SO DAVID AFTER ALL THESE YEARS IN SPAIN WHY HAVE YOU DECIDED TO GO TO THE U.S.?
BECKHAM
WELL IN THE END IT WAS DOWN TO THEM SPEAKING MY LANGUAGE...
CHEQUE
PAY: D. BECKHAM
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY EIGHT MILLION POUNDS
£128M
L.A. GALAXY
PAUL WOOD



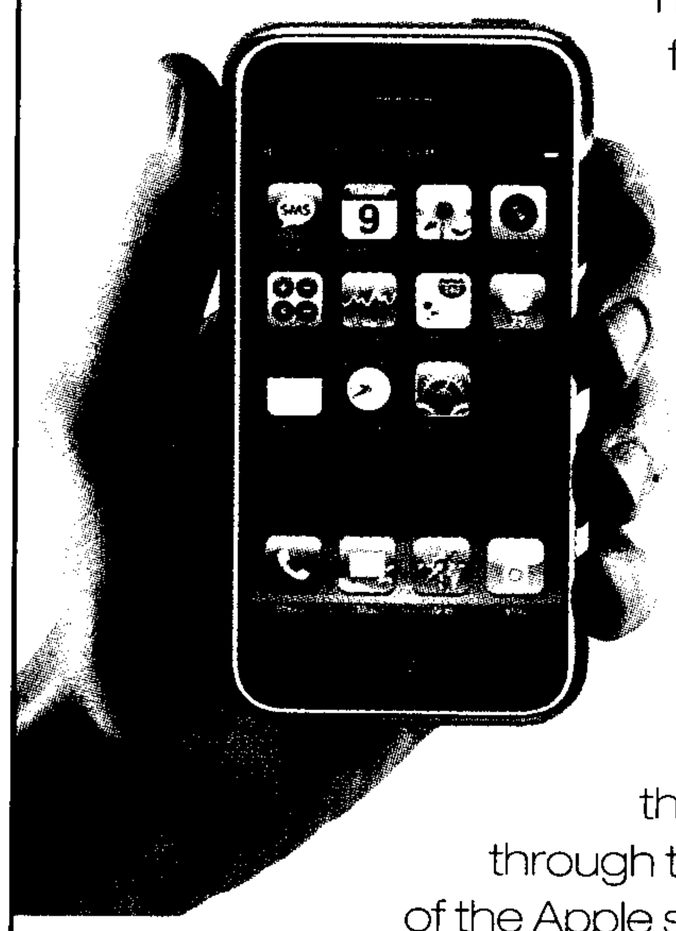
Hear no good **See no good** **Speak no good**

Advertisement

At last, from Apple

The iDontwantone

The ultimate in hand-held technology! Now, using the all-in-one device you can take a photo, download songs, play videos, access the internet and then with the iPhone you can ring up Apple to complain that none of the above facilities work.



And if the phone doesn't work you can text the customer services department – unless *that* doesn't work either, in which case you can use it as a brick (the iBrick facility) to throw through the window of the Apple store, attached to a lo-tech hand-written note saying, *"Why doesn't your stuff work properly?"*

Founder *Steve Jobs* says: "Try turning it off and then on again!"

NEW-LOOK NAVY

The incredible new novel from legendary storyteller Judas Iscariot

The Gospel According To Jeffrey

HE IS the most hated figure in the whole of history – a byword for dishonesty, greed and perjury *(Surely 'treachery'? Ed.)*

But now author Judas turns history on its head. Drawing on new evidence provided by world-famous scholar Professor Baloney, Judas asks, "Have we got it all wrong? Was Jeffrey in fact the most saintly man who ever lived?"

Says Judas, "Jeffrey has been vilified down the ages. But in reality he was an ascetic figure, living on top of a tower by the riverside, subsisting on a diet of nothing more than shepherd's pie and champagne while he wrote his sacred texts."

Judas proves conclusively that Jeffrey married the saintly Mary, whose odour of sanctity was so fragrant that judges fell down in a swoon at her passing.

In fact, concludes Judas,

Jeffrey may well have been the Son of God, only cheated of the top job by envious scribes and Pharisees who delighted in making up malicious stories about how he spent his evenings in the company of prostitutes and tax avoiders *(Surely 'gatherers'? Ed.)*

"Worth every penny of the 30 million pieces of silver he was paid by his publishers."
Sunday Times

"Hanging is too good for him"
The late S. Hussein

News In Brief

AMERICA 'TO INVADE IRAQ'

GEORGE BUSH has used his address to the American people to announce that the US is going to invade Iraq to free it from the disastrous American rulers.

Said a clearly angry President Bush, "This disgraced regime must know that the free world will not stand by as Iraq suffers.

"I dream of the day when American soldiers seize control of Baghdad and topple the statue of the country's hated ruler, George W. Bush," said President *(cont. p. 94)*

HOME OFFICE LATEST

HOME Secretary John Reid has revealed that he has no idea how many incompetent ministers are currently at liberty in the Home Office.

"The shoddy manner in which we store our records makes it impossible to give a precise figure, but we can only assume that, including me, it's all of them," said John *(cont. p. 94)*

EDUCATION UPDATE

EDUCATION Secretary Alan Johnston has announced that private school catchment areas, such as the Cabinet Office, are to be scrapped.

"This move will mean that expensive private schools will have to look beyond the Cabinet Office when selecting their pupils," said Alan *(cont. p. 94)*

NEW

TONY BLAIR 10th ANNIVERSARY

WORD QUIZ

Can you turn one word into the other? *(Time: 10 years)*

PROMISE

_ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _

FAILURE

Exclusive to all newspapers

FOR GOD'S SAKE, LEAVE KATE ALONE!

LOOK at this picture of poor Kate Middleton! Doesn't she look harassed, unhappy and fruity? *(Surely "at the end of her tether"? Ed.)* That is why we say this hounding of our fruity *(surely "future"?)* queen must stop at once. And there's only one way to make sure that lovely Kate doesn't suffer the same fate as tragic Diana. And that's for newspapers like us to stop publishing pictures like this one. And all the others in our special 94-page supplement *'Kate – The People's Prince's Girlfriend'*.

That's why we say all responsible British publications must respect Kate's privacy – it's our patriotic fruity. *(Surely "duty"? Ed.)*

BIROS SELL OUT AS NATION GOES KATE CRAZY

by Phil Space

Kate Middleton created a fashion storm yesterday, when she was snapped holding a biro outside her Chelsea flat.

Immediately High Street stores were besieged by desperate shoppers clamouring to buy a lookalike Kate biro.

Said Colin Envelope, manager at Rymans in Haywards Heath, "I can't get enough biros to meet demand. Everyone wants to use a biro just like Kate."

Experts say that there has been nothing like it since Nigella boiled an egg using water on TV last year and everyone immediately went water mad. As a result there was a drought across the entire country as precious stocks of Nigella-style water ran out and hosepipe bans were imposed nationwide.

STOP PRESS

British pedestrians have been emulating fashion-leader Kate Middleton by walking along the pavement. "It's the in-thing for 2007," said one idiotic *(cont. p. 94)*

Advertisement

Celeb Wedding Guests 'R' Us

Are you getting married and worried that your guest list is looking a bit sad – nothing but boring family and friends and no famous people?

Then the Gnome Bespoke Celeb-ration Service guarantees you your very own team of A-list celeb guests to make your Big Day an event to remember for ever!

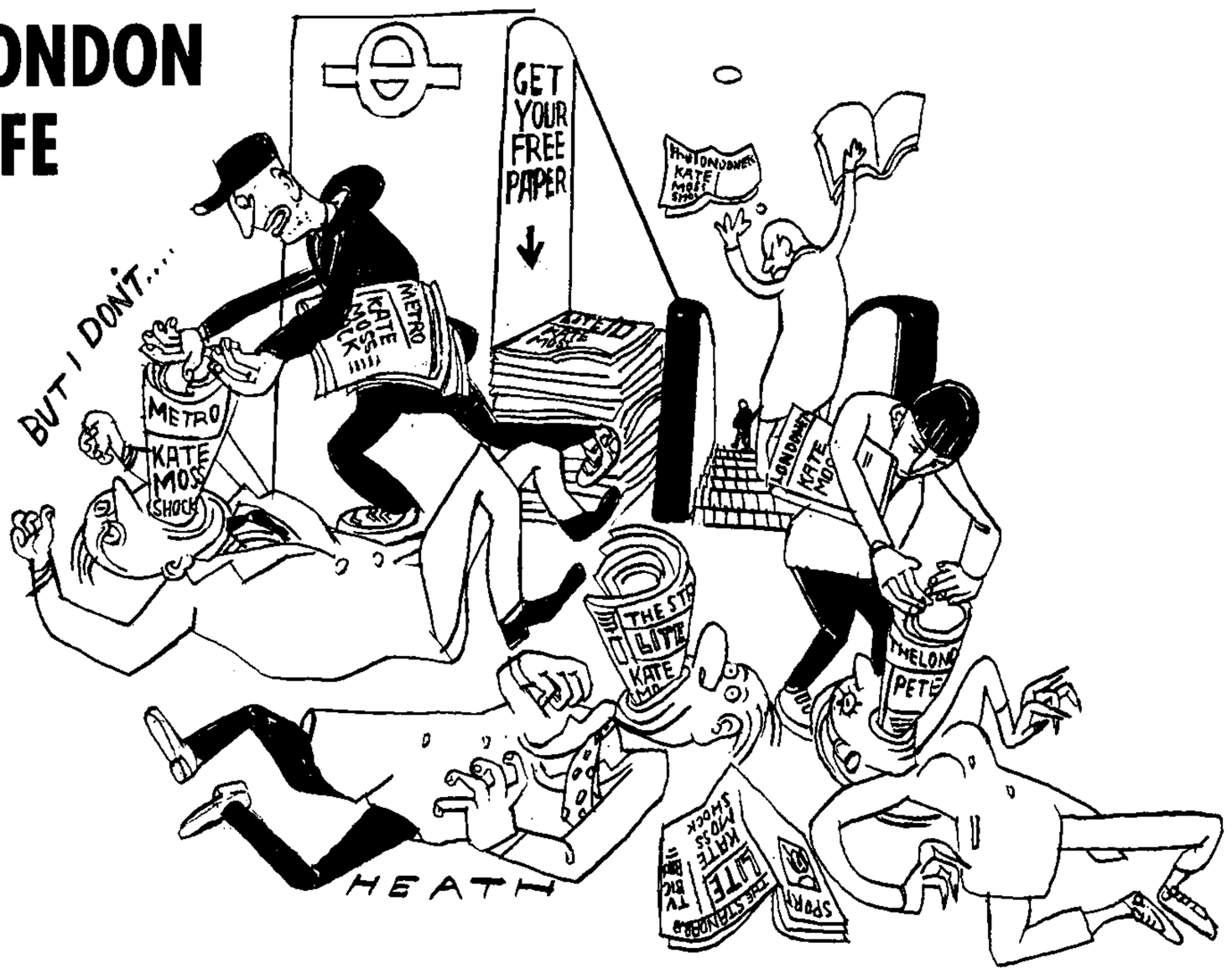
Here are just some of the Big Names who could be drinking your champagne and delighting your guests with their showbiz anecdotes:

- *Sir Elton John and his partner David Furnish*
- *Lady Jemima Puddleduck (née Fishpaste) and Sir Hugh Grant*
- *Sir David Beckham and Lady Poshina Spicewell*
- *Mr Piers Moron and Lady Celia Waldengrave*
- *Sir Matt Lucas and Dame David Walliams*

Make your wedding just like everyone else's!!! You've got the money – we've got the guests.

The Gnome Celeb-ration Marriage Service guarantees that your wedding will appear in Hello!, OK!, Closer, Heat, Nuts, Zoo and the Daily Telegraph!!!

LONDON LIFE



IRAQ: THAT EXIT STRATEGY IN FULL

'WE CANNOT LAST MUCH LONGER'

Moving Final Letter of Doomed Expedition Leader

by Our Saleroom Staff
Captain 'Quaker' Oates

ONE of the most moving documents of modern times is to be put on show to the public for the first time.

Dated January 2007, it is a letter from Captain Blair, leader of the ill-fated 'New Labour Expedition' which set out in May 1997 but never reached its destination.

The letter, addressed to 'whom it may concern', is written in a faltering hand, reflecting the fact that the writer knew that within a very short time it would all be over.

Here are some of the more poignant passages that the public will read for the first time.

"I fear it is all up for us. Conditions are hellish and getting worse by the day. Who would have thought that our great adventure would end up like this? From the beginning all those years ago, everything that could possibly go wrong has done so. Believe me when I say that I would have carried on if I could have done, but alas the fates have dealt me a cruel hand. You know in your heart that I have always done what I believe to be right, and I have no regrets about a single thing that I have done. I am totally convinced that everything I did since we set out was the right thing to do, and it is terribly unfair the way things have worked out. Please believe me when I say that I am proud of what we have achieved. So, God bless you all. It is getting bitterly cold. The wind is blowing at gale force. I don't think we can..."

Here the Captain's letter comes to an abrupt end. Clearly he knew that his mission would be remembered for generations to come as one of the greatest disasters in the history of the world.

WHAT WENT WRONG

May 1997. Blair expedition sets out with high hopes. Flag-waving crowds line the streets as he and his team embark on their epic journey.

June 1997. Things start to go wrong, but Blair assures his followers "Trust me, I'm a pretty straight kind of guy." They believe him.

July 1997. Team members begin to question whether the expedition is heading in the right direction. Some say they should move further to the left, others that they should move to the right. Blair insists that he knows of a hitherto unknown route, which he describes as "the third way".

August 1999. The first casualties. Petty Officer 'Mandy' Mandelson gallantly volunteered to leave the tent, but two minutes later he was back again. Blair had to ask him to leave a second time.

February 2003. More casualties. Able Seaman 'Ginger' Cook storms out in a huff, claiming that Blair is leading them in the totally wrong direction, which can only end in tears.

May 2006. 'Scotty' Brown, the purser, threatens a mutiny, claiming that he should take over. He and Blair are no longer on speaking terms.

June 2006. Blair still insists that he will carry on as leader, and that alone can bring them to their destination.

November 2006. The team belatedly discovers that Blair has indeed been leading them in wholly the wrong direction, and that for nine years they have just been going round in circles.

January 2007. Even Blair realises that the game is up and pens his moving final message to the world *(see above)*.

That Honorary Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS GORDONUS BROWNIUS CALEDONICUS MOROSUS ET HUMORLUS PER MULTO ANNUS CHANCELLORIUS EXCHEQUERUM NOMINE "FERRUM CHANCELLORUM" ET "AMATOR PRUDENTIAE" FAMOSUM PER SERMONES LONGISSIMOS ET ORATIONES INTERMINABILOS INCOMPREHENSIBILOSQUE DRONAVIT INSTRUCTANS POPULUM BRITANNICUM IN THEORIO NEO ENDOGENO BALLSENSIS TOTALIS. QUONDAM AMICUS ANTONINUS BLAIRUS IMPERATOR ET DUX UNIVERSUS ETCETERA SED NUNC HOSTIS IMPLACABILIS NONSPEAKUS MAXIMUS. MEMORANDUM SEMPER "CONCORDAT GRANITA" QUANDO ANTONINUS PROMISSAVIT IMPERIUM SUPREMUM AD GORDONO SED RENEGAVIT DURANTE DECEM ANNOS MISERABILIS. GAUDEAMUS GORDONUS FURIOSUS ET BITTERENSIS!!

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Lose money ● start smoking ● stop sleeping

Paul McKartney's
Five Step Guide to Changing Your Life

Step 1 Marry blonde gold digger.
Step 2 Er...
Step 3 That's it.
Yes, it'll be a completely new you in 2007!

FREE CD – Paul McKartney's *Deep Doodoo*. FREE on Saturday

Mel Gibson's **APOCALYPTO** with subtitles

*I blame the Jews myself

DIARY

HANNIBAL CONSUMES HIMSELF by Thomas Harris

The door to Dr. Hannibal Lecter's memory palace is in the darkness at the center of his mind. It has a latch that can be located – *from the Latin locus, locati* – only by an author armed with the full panopoly – *panos, panopolii* – of affectations.

His creator broods darkly, and, having darkly brooded, futher darkens his broodiness with great swathes of broody darkiness. This, he thinks, is Literature, as ordained by the 12th century mystic Geoffrye Literature.

Hannibal's creator is named Harris. "Thomas, Little Tom-Tom!" his mother would call him from the garden as he recited his nursery rhymes. *Jack and Jill fell down the hill, Jack fell down and broke his crown so that his brains spewed out while Jill tried to hold herself together, intestines spilling in her hands.*

"Come in from your wordy games, young Thomas! 'Tis time for your luncheon!" Forty years on, his mother's voice rings down the dank corridors of his memory palace. Beneath the author's beard, the sweat oozes through the pores like something jungley in a jungle.

Harris plump, bearded and bespectacled. In front of him, a notepad. But still no verb.

This time, he would prove the fool-critics wrong! He is more – so much more – more than more – than just a hack with a cannibal hero! He can juggle with words, he can quote from the very greatest! Wrongly he would prove them, just as wrongly as Frederick Goethe once proved them! Harris is a poet – a real poet who poetises as poetically as the next poet.

How could they call him pretentious? Without Dr Lecter, they would surely recognise him as a great writer, *un grande ecriviste!* He pleads and screams to be allowed into that novel cavern, free from tacky melodrama, wherein the sounds of Hannibal's slurps can never echo.

Behind Harris, a chair. In front of the chair, Harris. Before him, a notepad. On the notepad, a memorandum – named after Giovanni Memoranda, the 16th century Florentine sage – composed of three words:

KILL
HANNIBAL
IMMEDIATEMENT.

Hannibal came blundering into young Thomas's imagination many long cold dark years ago.

Sat sitting at his desk, alone with his word processor, young Thomas was dreaming his dream of being taken *tres serieux*. Of joining Fitzgerald and Hemingway in the celestial castle of those ordained for the garlands greatness. All he lacked was restraint.

But what will he write? He has all the adjectives and adverbs and nouns and prepositions to hand but he knows not what to do with them.

Nibble, nibble. A sound behind him, somewhere behind. *Nibble, nibble, nibble.* He turns round. *Nibble, nibble, nibble, nibble.* Dr Lecter is there, his mouth already full, the tell-tale L-shape of a human elbow sticking out between his teeth.

Dr Hannibal Lecter sinks those teeth into Thomas Harris and for decade upon decade he will not relax his bite.

Was it not the poet Samuel Tyler Coleridge who wrote of an Albatross, and Jane Keats who penned her Ode to the Nightingale? Harris longs to speak of Albatrosses and Nightingales. But there is no room for them here.

Instead it is Lecter whom he, in his imagination, must entertain. In short sentences.

For eternity.

The skull of the little deer lies in the dry bathtub.

The flayed skin of a child, little older than seven years of age, sits shrivelled in the boudoir.

Juicy cutlets from a retired Judge sparkle on a Regency platter.

The half-chewed eyeball of a former cheerleader, gently pierced by a silver cocktail-stick, floats on a perfectly-risen strawberry *coulis*.

The middle toe of an irascible hairdresser pokes out of a steaming Shepherd's Pie, watched over by a young Sicilian Prince as if painted by the ancient master Michelangelo Tintoretto.

The kneecap of a moustachioed former Nazi acts as the helmet on a delicious human vol-au-vent baked in a rich cream-and-white-wine sauce, topped by a sprig of eyelash.

Welcome to Harris Country, raddled and bare, its sentences factory-farmed. For three long decades, it has been controlled by the tyrant Dr. Lecter, munching and chewing his way through his creator's entrails.

Harris has tried everything. Turning round sentences, he has tried to make them poetic sound. Sending for the Nazis, the Mafia, the Red Army. Changing tenses, so the reader never knew what he will mean. And he has called in little kiddies and wolves and underground tunnels and man-eating pigs and spurting entrails.

But now Harris has had enough.

Time, it is time.

For *revenge*.

The bastard must be made to eat himself.

Harris grips his pen grippishly, his eyes ablaze, as if depicted in an early fresco by Diego Velazquez.

"I see you, and the cricket sings in concert with my heart," chips in a Japanese lady, who he has just introduced in order to lend a touch of oriental sophistication.

In another room, Hannibal finds himself spreading freshly-whipped *Sauce Hollandaise* on his own arm.

"I beg you, no – NOT THAT!" he pleads with his creator.

Too late. Despite himself, Hannibal bites into his forearm, chews it to the bone, swallows the gristle, spreads more sauce, tucks into first – mmm – his feet, then his legs, then – slobber, slurp – his genitalia, then his torso. All that remains is a head. A head is all that remains.

"Let that be an end to it!" he pleads. But there is no going back. His creator stretches his tongue. It is now a handy two feet long. It is scooping up his eyes, his nose, his ears, his cheeks, his lips.

All that remains is a set of teeth, jabbering back and forth in a frenzy of hatred and despair. Chomp, chomp. The teeth eat themselves, and emit a final burp.

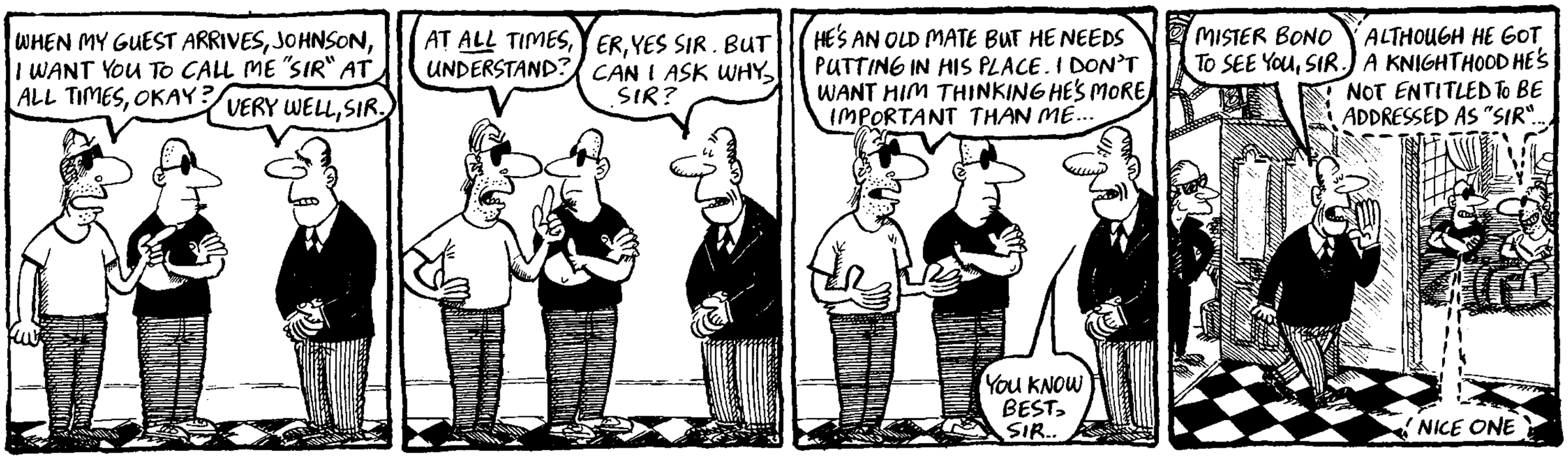
Harris sitting back, grins. But soon surfaces the troublesome thought.

What now?

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


WHEN MY GUEST ARRIVES, JOHNSON, I WANT YOU TO CALL ME "SIR" AT ALL TIMES, OKAY?
VERY WELL, SIR.
AT ALL TIMES, UNDERSTAND?
ER, YES SIR. BUT CAN I ASK WHY, SIR?
HE'S AN OLD MATE BUT HE NEEDS PUTTING IN HIS PLACE. I DON'T WANT HIM THINKING HE'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN ME...
YOU KNOW BEST, SIR..
MISTER BONO TO SEE YOU, SIR.
ALTHOUGH HE GOT A KNIGHTHOOD HE'S NOT ENTITLED TO BE ADDRESSED AS "SIR"...
NICE ONE

Literary Review

The Waste of Spaceland

Lines in celebration of Mr Craig Raine's exciting new study of T.S. Eliot

(Oxford University Press, £12.99)

So here's a book about Tom
Who, in a very real sense, we all hail from
Yes, me and old Seamus, Muldoon and the others.
The whole sodding modern poetic *galere*
That gets its advances from the chaps at Queen Square
That chittering band of post-modern blood brothers.

But Tom now, what an influence
On yours truly – not unduly, some might say, the old boy's
Criterion not quite the machete I wield
In *Arete*. Prufrock at half-cock?
Less of that, buster.
He didn't trust her, his first wife, that is,
When she went tonto.
If their love was ethereal, then he lived his material.
And got out pronto.

———

In the room the students come and go
Talking of their tutor's libido.

———

I was a Martian once. I wrote a postcard home
From a lifetime's wandering on the Oxford loam
Glittering prizes – I'll take all they're giving
Teaching students? Well, it's a living.

———

But back to Tom, who wrote of wastelands, knew Virginia
and Leonard,
And criticised the critic, and was a mite too
Pacific if you ask me, never went off
In a huff. As for me, show me the bastards who dump on my
Stuff and I'll soon have a go. Especially the sods at
Front Row. Anyway, you might think
Tom here was a dry old stick. Actually, no.
Take it from me he was a real goer, married a chick forty years
His junior, danced like a dervish so they say, couldn't have
Been spoonier. Never mind the worries about the fully
Lived life. You should just see Tom go with his spanking new
Wife.

[Not a point, alas, that I much care to labour
– the lady's a shareholder at Faber & Faber.]

———

I could have been a coiled serpent under a log
But settled for Art and a soft college job.

Tales from the Raj – Pt 94

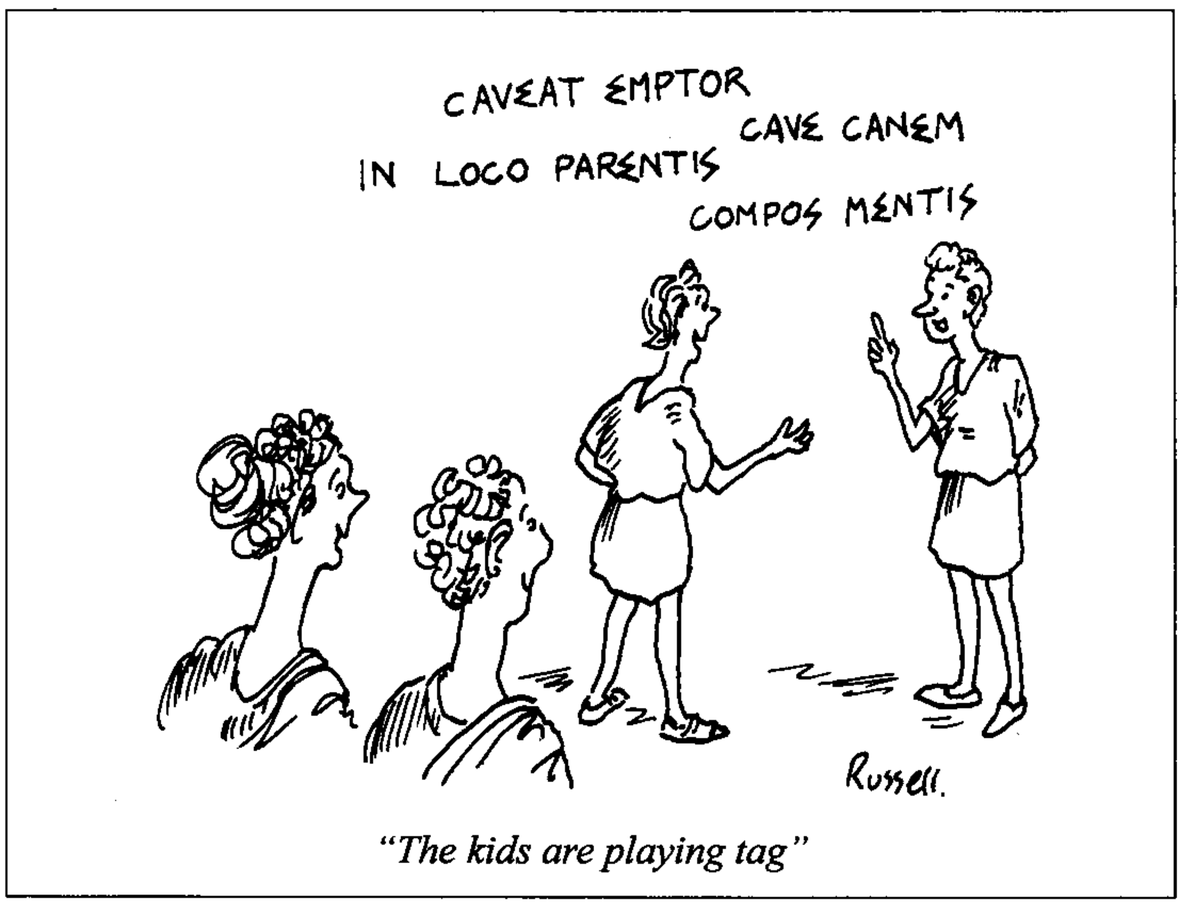
■ UBIQUITOUS media-shrink Dr Raj Persaud seems to have learned his lesson from the accusations of plagiarism that have dogged him recently.

Last year the *Times Educational Supplement* retracted a piece by Dr Raj after finding that he had "copied a very substantial percentage of the article's wording, without permission or acknowledgement", from work by an American professor. This followed a similar retraction by the *British Medical Journal* "owing to unattributed use of text from other published sources", and yet another one by the journal *Progress in Neurology*. It was also revealed that substantial portions of his book *From the Edge of the Couch* had been taken almost verbatim from other people's publications.

Now Persaud is editing a book called *The Mind: A User's Guide*, a joint venture by publishers Transworld and the Royal College of Psychiatrists – and instead of presenting other people's work as his own, this time he's presenting his own work as other people's.

The book has about 50 sections, each written by a specialist. When proofs were sent out recently, some of the eminent authors were surprised to find that Dr Raj had anonymously added a few concluding paragraphs. As one says, "it showed that whoever wrote it hadn't read or understood my chapter: it was simply wrong. This is reverse plagiarism – passing his crappy work off as mine." One academic has already withdrawn his contribution in protest, and several more are threatening to pull out.

Not that the publishers at Transworld seem unduly bothered. Their main concern is to keep Persaud happy, as it's his name that'll sell the book to people who have seen him on Richard and Judy's sofa. Indeed, although he is merely the editor rather than the author, the dust-wrapper consists of a large photo of Dr Raj, preening and posing like a pin-up from a boy-band.



"The kids are playing tag"

Books & Bookmen

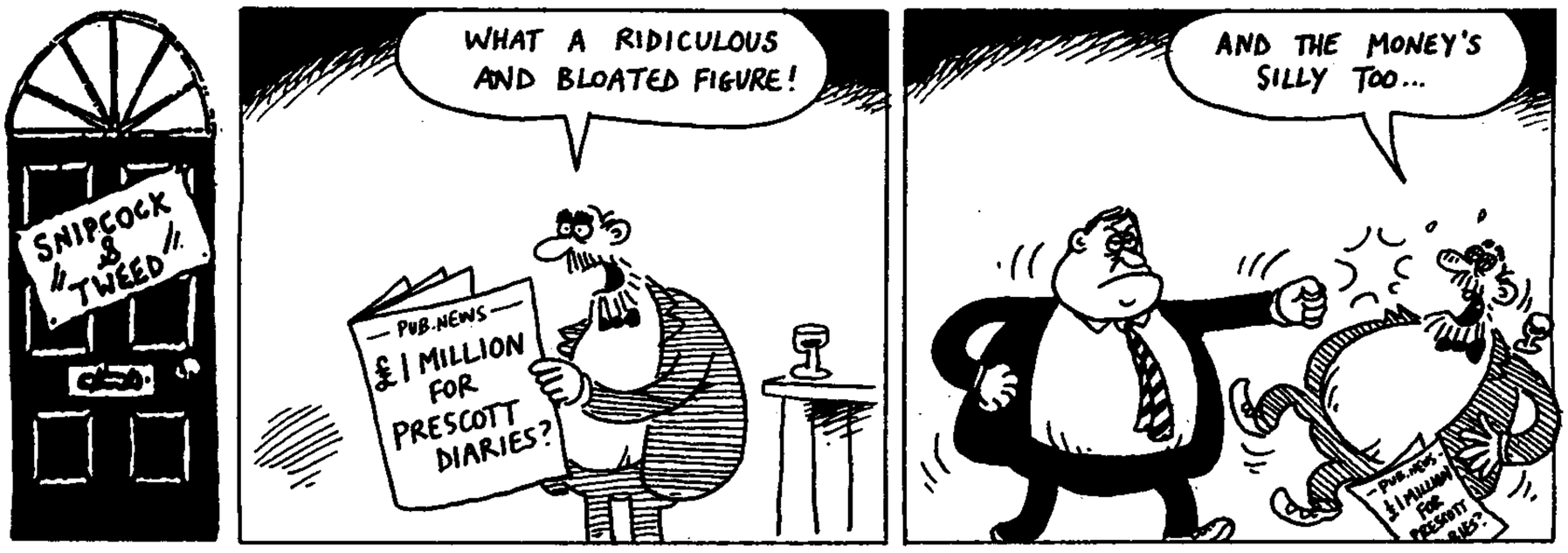
■ LAST year the distinguished New Zealand novelist C.K. Stead published *My Name Was Judas*, a fictionalised memoir in which Judas Iscariot defended himself against the charge that he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. In Stead's version, Judas didn't kill himself after the crucifixion but lived to a ripe old age and with a clear conscience.

Now, with a loud fanfare, Jeffrey Archer reveals the startlingly original premise of *his* next book. *The Gospel According to Judas* is, er, a fictionalised memoir dictated by Judas Iscariot to his son, defending him against the charge that he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. In Archer's version, Judas didn't hang himself after the crucifixion but lived to a ripe old age and with a clear conscience.

Another triumph for the master story-teller!

■ PREENING literary agent Ed Victor must have been delighted with the piece that led Celia Walden's Spy diary in the *Telegraph* last Friday. Revealing that a book by Alexander Litvinenko's widow "has been sold for a lucrative sum by agent Ed Victor", she added a quote from Victor himself boasting about his triumph.

And who is Walden's own literary agent? Step forward, Ed Victor.



■ "THIS book never captured my attention as most of the characters were such obvious literary contrivances," a dissatisfied customer writes of Andrew O'Hagan's novel *Be Near Me* on the Amazon website.

But another Amazon reviewer begs to differ. "The characterisation in this book is extraordinary: it's not often you feel you inhabit a character's head in this way," India Knight raves. "What will really stay with me are the moral questions posed by the book ... and the line 'a man cannot choose whom to love'. *Be Near Me* is an outstanding achievement, written with soaring lyricism. I haven't read a better book this year."

Alas, in her giddy rapture India Knight forgets to mention that O'Hagan is her husband. Could this explain why the line "a man cannot choose whom to love" has such resonance?

■ HAS the job of chairing the Booker prize judges gone to biographer Hermione Lee's head? Her new biog of Edith Wharton is not out until 24 January but it has already received one glowing review hailing it as a "a major new biography ... a rich new life" that overturns previous assumptions about an author with "an extraordinary life story". "A masterly biography" is the unequivocal verdict. Where does this gushing assessment appear? Er, on Lee's own website.

■ AMONG the New Year additions to the *Dictionary of National Biography* is an entry for our old friend Peter Carter-Fuck, written by his former colleague David Hooper. Noting that Carter-Fuck "enjoyed a high level of success in his cases", Hooper writes: "His soft-spoken, polite manner masked a steely determination and tenacity."

The soft-spoken, polite manner of the *DNB* entry is equally effective at masking Hooper's own opinion of Carter-Fuck. For that we must turn to the opening sentences of the *Guardian* obituary he wrote in December 2003: "The libel lawyer Peter Carter-Ruck, who died on Friday, had a chilling effect on the media. He was a chancer, out for the maximum fee. And he did for freedom of speech what the Boston Strangler did for door-to-door salesmen."

That's more like it!

■ IN AN attempt to supplement flagging book sales Waterstone's has increasingly been turning to non-book products, with a plan to massively increase that part of the business. So expect to see more board games, greetings cards, glow-in-the-dark stickers and soft toys in place of books. However, the strategy took quite a hit when the "related products" manager resigned recently after only six months in the job – and now her assistant has also quit. Head office buyers are becoming disillusioned with the "supermarket sweep" boys, as they call the new management team, and a fresh exodus is expected.

■ "DYKE demanded job back at BBC," shrieked the front page of the *Guardian* on 12 January following a successful freedom of information request to see the minutes of the BBC governors' meeting at which Greg Dyke was instructed to resign. "Dyke asked for job back days after quitting", yelped the *Telegraph*, while the *Independent* opted for "Confidential papers reveal Dyke asked the BBC to reinstate him", and even the *Mirror* weighed in with "BBC Bid by Dyke".

"This isn't a new story," muttered a bewildered Dyke on Radio 4's *Today* programme. "If you read my book two years ago it was all in there." Sadly the former director-general is belatedly waking up to a fact that the *Eye* pointed out in December 2004: no one did read his book. Despite the £500,000 that Harper Collins splashed out in an advance on *Inside Story*, it sold just 8,000 copies in its year of publication. Neither of the newspapers which helped the publishers claw back a small portion of that cash in serialisation fees – the *Observer* and *Mail on Sunday* – thought that Dyke's "tongue-in-cheek" reapplication letter was worth mentioning at the time.

FIRST DRAFTS
YOU WILL THINK OF A NEW SUBJECT FOR A SELF-HELP BOOK...
INSTANT CONFIDENCE
I CAN MAKE YOU THIN
QUIT SMOKING TODAY
Pearsall

Paul McKenna

■ THIS term Oxford English students will have a swift, four-letter retort ready if New College don and poet Craig Raine accuses them of "recycling old work" or "ignoring what you were asked to do".

Though nominally part of OUP's "Lives and Legacies" series, his new book on T.S. Eliot sniffily includes as little biography as possible; instead he uses close readings to defend Eliot against his enemies, as in an appendix (only included, he revealingly said on Radio 4, as a grudging concession to his publisher) rebutting the charge of anti-Semitism. So it's essentially his essay "In Defence of T.S. Eliot" – published in 2000 – reheated and given a few dollops of ketchup. Why does he eschew the tawdriness of biography? Because he's a pal from his Faber days of Valerie Eliot, the author's widow; a strange friendship, as her notoriously languid editing of Old Possum's letters (one volume in 1988, then silence) has made the publisher a laughing stock.

"All them girls"
(pause)
"You must be like a kid in a sweet shop,"
He said.
I pondered.
If you were a kid in a sweet shop,
The first half hour would be nice.
Mmmmmm, *sweets* you'd think, *Delicious*!
You'd cram caramel into your lusty gut
Scoff toffees and gobble choc drops
Yielding to the spirit of Bacchus*
You'd gorge on sherbert mountains
And guzzle fizzy pop lagoons.

But in the moon's glare when
The sweet shop bristled
With hollow lonely clicks
You'd squirm.

Dull looming jars. Bereft of treats.
Floor strewn with curly white corpses,
Like Columbine on Wonka's factory floor,
Slaughtered oompa loompas twitching by the counter.
Then the demons would come.
You'd paw the indifferent glass, cold like Spandau walls
"What wouldn't I give for a sprout"
You'd mutter as you died of diabetes.
He reflected; "Still, all them girls..."

RUSSELL BRAND 'Feed Me', Sunday Poem, *Independent on Sunday*

*[*Ed's note – Bacchus is actually the God of wine*]

Pseuds Corner

Like Mahatma Gandhi, his hero, [Monty] Panesar's kind and gentle exterior does not extinguish the fierce determination burning within. The rise of the first Sikh to represent England is uplifting beyond his community. He has moved beyond that clichéd status of cult hero into mainstream popularity: a sporting Andy Warhol.

RICHARD HOBSON, *The Times*

There was a little old lady who was walking down the road,
She was struggling with bags from Tescos.
There were people from the City having lunch in the park
– I believe that it's called "alfresco".

What made Lily Allen the musical face of 2006? Almost all the answers are here in these lines from her debut album which depict a summer's day in London. The detail; the deft turn of phrase; the offbeat subject matter; the dry humour; the learning lightly worn...*[continues]*

TOM HORAN, *Daily Telegraph*

The jagged recollections of a beautiful mind

Sub-title of TRACEY EMIN's book *Strangeland*

Pseuds Corporate

Excellence in patient care with lean manufacturing

If you believe that you can utilise lean methodology to shape modern, patient-centred health services assisting King's to make the step-change to a Lean Hospital, please send your CVs to...*[continues]*

King's College Hospital seeks 'Lean Specialist Change Leaders', *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Toby Hicks, Lord Gnome, Francis Harvey, Adam Wentworth, Sheila Dillon.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Gold stars all round

THE companies behind what should be twenty- or thirty-year commitments to PFI hospitals, schools and much else are finding increasingly lucrative and secretive ways to cash in early.

The latest ruse is to sell off the special companies set up by banks and builders to own and run the PFI contracts. In the biggest sale so far, announced this month, the Secondary Market Infrastructure Fund (SMIF), home to seventy-nine PFI projects, will be sold to property giant Land Securities for £927m. Although SMIF's current owner, private equity group Star Capital, refuses to say how much it will make beyond a "healthy" return (its PR agent told the *Eye* it was a "private equity transaction" and refused to answer questions), accounts filed at Companies House suggest it runs into hundreds of millions.

SMIF's PFI investments are owned through a company called Star Infrastructure Investments LLP, whose latest (2005) balance sheet puts its value at around £150m. So how can the whole lot now command nearly £1bn, and several hundred million in profit? The reason is that the PFI contracts generate government-backed income for decades on deals for which the taxpayer is invariably paying over the odds (*Eyes passim*).

To compound the rip-off, the windfall will almost certainly be tax-free. Star, together with bankers AMP and HBOS, owns SMIF through a Luxembourg company called Starsmif Investments Luxembourg Sarl that won't be troubled by capital gains tax. The buyer, Land Securities, is to become one of the Chancellor's new tax-exempt "real estate investment trusts" and won't pay tax on its PFI income.

The Treasury refuses to claw back any of these windfalls as it believes a "market" in PFI deals is essential to keep up demand for a scheme that flatters Gordon's accounts.

Prime numbers

LAND SECURITIES is already the beneficiary of a mind boggling PFI bill, unearthed through a series of Freedom of Information requests by the *Eye*, at the cash-strapped Department for Work and Pensions (currently taking a scythe to 30,000 jobs under the government's "efficiency" programme).

DWP will pay £9.7bn under a twenty-year contract called PRIME (Private sector Resource Initiative for the Management of the Estate), originally signed in 1998 and expanded in 2001, under which job centres and other buildings were sold and leased back from Land Securities Trillium.

The official "capital value" of PRIME, however, was a mere £455m while the National Audit Office put the "net present cost" of the deal at £3.2bn. But how to explain the small matter of the missing £6.5bn? First there's inflation included in the £9.7bn, conservatively estimated at 2.5 percent per annum (so the real cost will probably be even higher). Then the uninflated future yearly payments are discounted by a whopping 6 percent per year – a straightforward fiddle founded in an obscure economic market theory that has no relevance to public finances. Hey presto! The cost instantly looks cheaper than the alternative of the government owning the buildings when it will in fact be billions more expensive, while the lucky company buying them gets the deal of a lifetime (and the government's huge liability stays off Gordon's books).

Despite repeated requests over several weeks, DWP won't let the *Eye* see the calculations of how a £10bn deal could be presented to everybody at a third of the price. But even the numbers that are known show one thing: once again today's and tomorrow's taxpayers have been taken for a multi-billion pound ride.

That's enough EDS

MEANWHILE MPs are asking just how IT giant EDS manages to screw billions of pounds out of the Department for Work and Pensions at rates far in excess of what private companies will pay (see *Eye* 1174).

A recent parliamentary question from the Lib Dem shadow work and pensions secretary, David Laws, reveals that it could be because DWP hands the company contracts without any competition and thus little idea of whether it's paying a fair price.

Although such practice is generally a no-no under procurement rules that instruct departments to find the best price, big spenders like DWP get round running competitions for their business through officially sanctioned "framework agreements" with favoured suppliers. Under two agreements for web-based systems, EDS has won five DWP contracts, none of which it has had to compete for, including running the internet pensions forecasting system that was recently ditched. DWP didn't answer the *Eye*'s request to know how many deals EDS had won altogether in such circumstances.

Framework agreements are the brainchild of the Treasury's Office of Government Commerce. They are deemed to save the taxpayer money and, under a bizarre arrangement moving money from one government pocket to another, pay a commission for the OGC. The amounts EDS is being paid over the odds, however, suggest the poor old taxpayer is in fact being ripped off once again.

P.S. The DWP finance director, John Codling, was duly awarded a CB in the New Year honours.

Revolving doors

CORPORATE virtue is low on the agenda at the electronics chain Dixons (now DSG International). Criticised in recent years by the Office of Fair Trading over misleading "interest-free" loans (they were nothing of the sort) and extended warranty rip-offs, the company has long relied on stashing profits from its lucrative sidelines offshore to make tax-free profits.

But this hasn't harmed the brains behind this way of doing business, the company's longstanding chief executive John Clare. Awarded a CBE two years ago, he has now been given a senior government position as chairman of the Department for Work and Pensions' Jobcentre Plus. Clare will at least be able to renew acquaintance with all the Dixons staff made redundant when 106 stores were closed in 2004 owing to the company's poor performance.

In another imaginative move, John Elbourne joins the DWP's Pensions Client board. As Prudential Assurance chief executive between 1996 and 2001, Elbourne's service to pension clients is somewhat questionable. The company was fined £650,000 by regulators for failing, on Elbourne's watch, to address its legendary pensions mis-selling of the 1980s and 90s.

Pensions Secretary John Hutton, who similarly refuses to compensate people who have lost pensions – in his case owing to government deception – pronounced himself "extremely pleased" with the appointments.

CALMAC FERRIES

Crew-d calculation

JUST how much is putting the Scottish islands ferry service out to tender going to end up costing taxpayers?

Ferry company Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) is wholly owned by the Scottish Executive, with a board of directors appointed by Scottish ministers. Its annual report disclosed that the Scottish Executive is to shell out £16m to "strengthen the capital base" to help restructure the company and allow it to compete for the ferry routes it currently runs. Some £12m has already been handed over, another £4m is to follow.

As a lifeline for the islanders living off the west coast of Scotland, CalMac already gets £26m a year in public subsidy from Holyrood. Following complaints that CalMac's monopoly on the routes was in breach of European regulations, Scottish ministers decided to put the routes out to open public tender.

In December, CalMac and international shipping company V.Ships were invited to tender for the Clyde and Hebrides routes, but the month also saw CalMac in hot water after privately run rivals on the Gourock-Dunoon route complained to Audit Scotland that CalMac was using foot-passenger subsidies to offer a 70 percent discount to one firm of hauliers. CalMac has now apologised for the misuse of taxpayers' money.

Meanwhile, in preparation for competition, CalMac has already adopted a money-saving ruse used in much of the rest of the shipping business – off-shoring its employees to avoid tax (see *Eye* 1137). Earlier this year CalMac registered a separate company, Caledonian MacBrayne Crewing, to employ its 800 sea-going staff. Caledonian MacBrayne Crewing is based off-shore in Guernsey, thereby making "substantial tax savings" by avoiding £9m in National Insurance payments – yet more cost to the taxpayer.

Isn't tendering supposed to be about getting value for money?

AVIATION

Night flighty

FOLLOWING the sale of Exeter airport this month, Devon County Council leader Brian Greenslade told the local press that no clause had been put in the £60m contract restricting night flights – because the authority had received "few complaints" on the subject.

Oh really? Cllr Greenslade can't have heard about the packed town meeting in nearby Ottery, which called for the county to ban night flights before the airport's sale to the Balfour Beatty-led Regional & City Airports Consortium. Nor can he have encountered local pressure group Airport Concern Exeter, who have been energetically making the same point with petitions and posters ever since plans to sell the airport were announced.

Even a cross-party group set up by, er, Devon County Council to scrutinise the environmental impact had called for the issue of night flights to be addressed before the sale – i.e. while the council still had power to protect residents from disturbed sleep.

Most airports have to restrict noise (and therefore flying) between midnight and 6am, but *Eye* 1166 reported on the impact of unrestricted night flying at Nottingham East Midlands Airport, where thousands of people under the flight path say they are kept awake by noise.

The Colin Stagg Story

HACKWATCH

THE *Daily Mail* revealed last week that Colin Stagg will get £250,000 compensation from the Home Office. Despite being acquitted of killing Rachel Nickell, it reported, he "has been made a pariah and says he is still widely suspected of Rachel's murder" – although, as even the *Mail* now has to admit, he is clearly innocent.

But it omitted one reason for the pariah status and the enduring suspicions: since his murder trial collapsed in 1994 both the *Mail* and its Sunday sister paper have often led readers to believe, with many a nod and wink, that Stagg was indeed the culprit.

"I don't feel in the least bit sorry for Stagg," David Mellor wrote in the *Mail on Sunday* back in **September 1994**. As a "known deviant", he had "only himself to blame that he was a suspect". What incensed Mellor was that Stagg could never be tried again for the murder, "even if the police suspicions are right, and stronger evidence against him were now to be found".

In **September 1996**, the *Daily Mail* breathlessly revealed that Rachel Nickell's family were planning a civil action against Stagg – a scoop instantly demolished when Nickell's father denied planning anything of the sort. In **October 1996** the *MoS* returned to the fray with a hatchet-job on Stagg based on selective quotations from "evidence" which the police would have presented had his trial run its course. The following week, in another two-page feature taunting Stagg, the paper complained that "Stagg cannot stand trial for Rachel's murder again, even if new evidence came to light whch incriminated him".

In **August 1997** the *Daily Mail* reported with palpable regret that Stagg had abandoned plans to sue the police. "This would have resulted in him giving evidence in court and being cross-examined. 'We could have given 101 reasons why we arrested and then charged Stagg,' one officer said." A few days later Norman Tebbit's *MoS* column had a photo of Stagg walking his dog in Richmond Park. "In my opinion Stagg is potentially a very dangerous man who should be closely watched," Tebbit warned, "and women who walk alone – or with dogs – in Richmond Park should be aware of the risk of encountering him."

In **July 2000** the *Daily* Mail found another excuse to revive the story: "Starting today, a series revealing the inside secrets of the hunt for the maniac who butchered a mother on Wimbledon Common." This was based on a book by Keith Pedder, the detective inspector who led the murder inquiry. As the *Mail* observed, his main purpose in writing the book was to justify his handling of the case and repeat "his clear belief that Colin Stagg got away with murder".

In **July 2001** the *Mail* had an interview with Nickell's former boyfriend, who urged the government to scrap the double-jeopardy rule so that Stagg could be prosecuted again for the murder. The double-jeopardy rule was duly scrapped in December 2003. So why wasn't Stagg charged again? Because, er, the police had belatedly turned their attention to another line of inquiry. As none other than the *Daily Mail* reported in **November 2004**: "Exclusive: RACHEL'S MURDER: A NEW SUSPECT." The suspect in question, who cannot be named for legal reasons, had first been identified by the *Mail* as long ago as 1995 – but since then it had either forgotten or ignored his existence.

In its November 2004 story, the *Mail* was suddenly full of indignation at the police's long obsession with Stagg as the only possible culprit. It quoted a senior lawyer: "Mr Stagg appears to have a very credible claim for up to £1m in compensation. Here we have an innocent man who, as a result of a very poor police investigation, was charged with murder and held in custody for over a year. He has been pilloried and his life totally destroyed."

Quite so. Then as now, however, the *Mail* sees no need to mention who led the pillorying – still less to apologise.

KNACKERWATCH

SO KEITH PEDDER, the detective who led the 1992 investigation into the murder of Rachel Nickell, has finally accepted that Colin Stagg deserves compensation for being wrongly branded her killer.

Speaking after news broke that the Home Office had agreed to pay compensation – estimated at £250,000 – to Mr Stagg, Pedder told the London Evening Standard: "He has suffered quite a considerable amount but that is largely due to the trial by media rather than anything that happened in court."

And who encouraged the media? None other than Knacker, which announced immediately after Stagg's Old Bailey acquittal that the police were not looking for anyone else over the killing. And it was the police, of course, who went to such extraordinary lengths in their pursuit of Stagg that, under the strain of extensive questioning, he eventually confessed to, er, sunbathing naked on Wimbledon Common. He was immediately charged with indecency, hauled before magistrates and could then be labelled a "convicted sex offender".

The reality is that Stagg had a spotless record. He only faced trial because he was said by the prosecution to match a psychological profile of the killer drawn up by Paul "Crackers" Britton. There was no forensic evidence and no witness to put him at the scene.

As Mr Justice Ognall, the judge who threw the case out, pointed out, not only did Stagg not match Britton's "sexually deviant" profile, the profile itself was "mere opinion". Staggered that the Crown had brought such a case, he said: "The notion of psychological profiling in any circumstances as proof of identity is redolent of considerable danger."

Police attempts to get Stagg to match this notional profile included getting an undercover policewoman, posing as "Lizzie James", to offer Stagg friendship and sex in the hope that he would reveal the peculiar sexual traits envisaged by Crackers, or better still confess. But Stagg repeatedly denied involvement throughout the seven-month increasingly desperate sting. The judge condemned these measures, and an explicit tape sent to Stagg in which the officer fantasises about male domination, group sex and the use of a knife to heighten sexual excitement, which he described as "the most vivid illustration of shaping the accused's mind".

"I must bear in mind that the policewoman was acting under orders and that the police in turn were being guided by the psychologist, but they cannot excuse their instigation of this sort of stratagem… it betrays not merely an excess of zeal but a substantial attempt to incriminate a suspect by positive and deceptive conduct of the grossest kind," he said.

Of course, now DNA has put another man, a patient in Broadmoor, in the frame for the brutal killing of Ms Nickell in front of her toddler son, Pedder has had to grudgingly accept that Stagg needs to be compensated. But long-time readers of the *Eye* will be less amazed. We revealed back in November 1995 that the man had been questioned by a senior detective investigating the case (see *Eye* 911).

As Paul Foot noted at the time, he "denied the Nickell murder. He was asked whether he was at work on the day of the Nickell murder three years previously but could not remember. No further action was taken."

CORRUPTION

JUST FANCY THAT!

CURIOUS goings on at the Department for International Development, which selected engineering consultants Mott MacDonald to send out questionnaires to British construction firms as part of a transparency initiative on corruption in publicly funded projects.

The Serious Fraud Office is considering investigating Mott Macdonald over accusations that it bribed two senior officials linked to a dam-building scheme, the World Bank-funded Lesotho Highlands Water Project. A forensic audit report for the Lesotho crown prosecutor, by Price-waterhouseCoopers' South Africa office, found almost £75,000 paid by Mott MacDonald among the alleged illegal payments to officials.

The firm is involved through a consortium with German company Lahmeyer, which has already been banned from World Bank projects for the next seven years. Two other firms involved, Italian Impreglio and Canadian Acres International, have also been found guilty of corruption and the Lesotho chief executive of the scheme has been jailed.

Number crunchins

70 ■ British civil servants stationed in Saudi Arabia to sell mainly BAe arms to the Riyadh government

15 ■ Investigators assigned to Britain's International Corruption Task Force, to probe corruption on deals like BAe's sales to the Saudis

HEALTH SPECIAL

OPEN AND SHUT CASE

WOULD you want to know if the heart surgery unit you'd been referred to put you at "serious clinical risk", had facilities that were "almost certainly the worst in the country" and was covered overnight by doctors with "little or no cardiothoracic surgical experience"?

And what about if the unit exhibited "disharmony", "interpersonal differences" between surgeons and anaesthetists and "a clear failure of teamwork"? It could have been Bristol in 1992 but alas it was St Mary's London in 2005. And in the new post-Bristol spirit of openness and accountability, the report highlighting these failures was kept secret until it was flushed out by a *Grauniad* investigation 18 months later. As a spokesman for St Mary's put it: "It was an internal report commissioned from an independent leading expert. Staff needed to feel they could be completely honest and open when providing information and they did so on the understanding that the report was for internal use only."

As well as ignoring the recommendations of the largest public inquiry in British history, this secrecy emphasises the pointlessness of patient choice in its current form. Patients need reliable information about the quality and safety of their surgery, rather than a few smiley faces in the hand washing and car parking columns.

In St Mary's defence, its death rates for 2001-2003 were "only slightly above the national average and well within acceptable limits". But it's hard to judge their accuracy when the figures were not validated and the trust had "no routine system for reliably counting the number of cases performed".

This exposure has lead to a rehashing of the woolly Bristol arguments ("it's not just us – lots of other places are just as bad", "don't blame the staff, blame the facilities" etc). What's most depressing is that the focus of the NHS has irreversibly shifted from quality and safety (witness the failure of the National Patient Safety Agency) to competition and throughput. Trusts that have to compete to survive are far more likely to bury bad news and carry on regardless rather than temporarily suspending surgery (and income) to assess patient safety.

In the current climate, secret reports never stay secret for long. And even if you try to reassure patients that all of the recommendations have now been implemented, the fact that you may have subjected patients to "serious clinical risks" 18 months ago – without telling them – is anything but reassuring. As anaesthetist Steve Bolsin put it: "To prevent another Bristol, you must never lose sight of the patient."

● **THE *Eye* reader in search of orthopaedic shoes who was given the Choose and Book password "cake counter" is not alone (*Eye* 1175). In Poole, a man with acne has been landed with "broccoli spot", another requesting a vasectomy logs on as "fountain saver". All C&B passwords gratefully received.**

M.D.

NHS I.T.

Advance planning

FIGURES obtained by the Eye reveal that far from only paying the big companies when they deliver results –as long claimed – the agency running the NHS's National Programme for IT has been generously subbing them for years.

Up to March last year, in addition to payments for finished IT systems the agency, Connecting for Health, made a total of £443m in "advance payments" to suppliers BT, Accenture, CSC and Fujitsu. The arrangement, which enables the companies to claim they are doing better than they really are on their contracts, has long been hushed up. In December 2005 the then health minister Liam Byrne (now struggling with suspect figures at the Home Office) told Parliament that "to date, £234m has been paid to the programme's principal contractors". In fact £400m in advance payments alone had been shelled out by then. Last June his successor Caroline Flint said that BT, for example, had received just £1.3m for its dismal performance on its contract to supply systems in London's NHS trusts. It had actually been paid £83m up front.

Connecting for Health claims that as the advance payments are protected by bonds (i.e. undertakings to pay money back if the companies don't do what they should), "the principle of payment on delivery is maintained". So, it seems, was the principle of lying when asked how much the companies had been paid.

N3BG

ONE of the easy bits of the NHS National Programme for IT was supposed to be the broadband network known as N3.

But the network is bogged down in problems. First, GPs found the system impossibly slow, often unavailable and unable to cope with the "Choose and Book" system of hospital referrals foisted upon them because the network didn't have sufficient bandwidth. An upgrade – if they dared ask for it – would cost tens of thousands more from the company responsible for the system, BT. And now a series of "time outs" on connection to the internet, crucial for some clinical information, have users reporting access down for several hours at a time.

BT doesn't seem in a great hurry to fix the problem, perhaps because it has emerged from posts by disgruntled medics on the e-Health Insider website that the company's £530m contract to deliver N3 contains, er, *no* clause for the time within which problems should be fixed!

HAEMOPHILIA

Blood money

NOW that rehabilitated Iraq war rebel Lord Hunt has returned to his old brief at the Department of Health, he has a chance to right an old wrong against the blighted haemophiliac community who were given a series of deadly diseases by infected blood.

Eye readers may remember that after a long campaign, the government finally agreed to pay "compassion money" to haemophiliacs who had been given the fatal liver disease Hepatitis C, along similar lines to those infected with HIV.

It was hardly generous and a fraction of that offered by similar schemes in Canada and Ireland. It amounted to £20,000 each for the 5,000 people infected, with an extra £25,000 for those who could show the disease had become "serious". The scheme, the Skipton Trust, was beset with problems. Initially it fast-tracked payment for those who had received similar "compassion" money for being infected with HIV/Aids – they were already on a payment database.

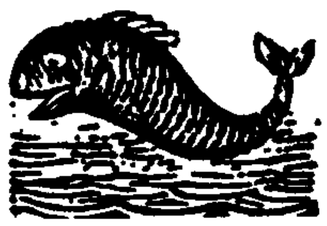
Those with hepatitis alone at first received nothing. Nor was there any sign of the enhanced payments for those with "end stage" liver disease. And initially it ignored widows and dependants, many of whom gave up their jobs to care for loved ones suffering from cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Finally the government said that those whose partners died after the scheme came into being could receive funds. But for the 200 or so who lost loved ones before August 2003, there is still nothing. In the meantime, criminal charges have been brought against an administrator of the scheme after £750,000 – enough to compensate several widows – was alleged to have been siphoned off.

Hunt's predecessor at the department, Lord Warner, always refused to end the injustice. Lord Hunt, who resigned his health brief in 2003 in protest at the Iraq war, has in the past acknowledged the shabby treatment of the country's haemophiliacs. He could put his money where his mouth is and compensate the widows, before they too die.

FISHFARM

The Great Escape



MORE than a million salmon escaped from Scottish fish farms or died in their cages in one year, according to figures released by the Scottish Executive's Fisheries Research Service – after the Scottish Information Commissioner forced them to disclose the name of a fish farmer involved in an escape incident in 2006.

The figures are for 2005 and show that Norwegian-owned Stolt Sea Farms Ltd lost 321,000 salmon from its Noth Uist and Stornoway farms. The second worst offender was North Uist Fisheries Ltd, which lost 169,000 fish, largely due to cages breaking up in bad weather. Marine Harvest Scotland (owned in 2005 by Dutch multi-national Nutreco) lost 153,874 fish. Several other fish farms also let tens of thousands of salmon escape.

A ten-year study by scientists in Ireland concluded in 2003 that escapes of farmed salmon threaten the extinction of Wild North Atlantic Salmon due to both the lice and diseases that farmed fish carry into wild populations and interbreeding, which makes fish less able to survive in a wild environment. The World Wildlife Fund says the escapees also put other fish and both marine and freshwater ecosystems at risk.

● After the West Highlands fish farm company Landcatch Limited was caught plotting to falsify records for the use of the chemical formalin, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) promised an investigation (*Eye* 1172). Campaigners blew the whistle on Landcatch, sending SEPA a copy of a leaked Landcatch guidance note, also seen by the *Eye*, suggesting that when more than the permitted level of formalin was used, "surplus treatments should be recorded as taking place on another day".

SEPA inspectors who investigated in November found that "it was not possible ... to obtain reliable information on the total mass of formaldehyde discharged from the site in any consecutive 24-hour period". SEPA issued a formal warning notice to Landcatch "with regard to the quality of record keeping", giving the company 14 days to clean up its act or face prosecution. SEPA has promised follow up inspections in 2007.

In the City

BRITAIN will find itself in the dock this week over its Dear Leader's decision – conveyed last month by his legal poodle, the attorney general Lord Goldsmith, to the Serious Farce Office – to drop its more than two-year investigation into BAE Systems and Saudi corruption. However, it will not be either Tony Blair or Lord Goldsmith who has to defend the craven decision at a closed meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's anti-bribery working group in Paris.

That embarrassment falls to the SFO lawyers who were in charge of the case until its sudden demise – plus, no doubt, civil servants from Goldsmith's office equipped with a prepared script echoing their master's voice.

All this is hardly likely to make for much *illumination at the OECD*. Especially as SFO director Robert Wardle – also not expected to attend – has signalled that he did not agree with the Goldsmith "wider public interest" diktat. How will that be explained in his absence, and what will the OECD be told as to who's decision it was to drop the Saudi case? Goldsmith insists it was the SFO's decision, but Wardle's comments about the need to complete the investigation suggest this was not so.

Wardle took on the investigation in 2004, following a lengthy vetting period from 2003 when the BAE "slush fund" allegations were first made public; his predecessor, Rosalind Wright, had been fobbed off by the Ministry of Defence when allegations of a "slush fund" first surfaced in 2001. That year also clearly showed who's in charge when it comes to politically sensitive SFO investigations: Wright was over-ruled by Goldsmith and told to launch an initially rejected investigation into price-fixing of generic drugs supplied to the NHS. That prosecution awaits an Appeal Court, and ultimately probably a Law Lords, decision on whether price-fixing was an offence in the Nineties as it has been since the Enterprise Act 2002.

It is hard to imagine the SFO official in charge of the BAE case, the less-than-steely assistant director Helen Garlick, contradicting the attorney general and admitting what is clearly obvious: that the SFO took its decision after Goldsmith made clear, on instructions from Downing Street, that the investigation was to be halted because of Saudi blackmail over the £10bn Eurofighter contract.

Similarly, it is hard to see how Garlick, as a relatively junior civil servant, can contradict Goldsmith's statement that "this is a decision by the prosecutor, it is not a political decision", or easily answer questions as to whether she or her boss were threatened with dismissal if they did not do what was required – or whether they considered resigning over the decision made after Goldsmith had "passed on" Blair's "public interest considerations". Time, it seems, for a revisiting of the Nuremburg defence about only obeying orders while of course denying there were any such orders.

Thankfully perhaps for all concerned, especially Goldsmith, the proceedings will not take place in public and there will be no minutes, just a statement at the end of the three-day session.

The OECD gathering is part of a regular run of meetings to police its anti-bribery convention, to which Britain was a slow signatory. But matters are likely to be far from routine this time, as the OECD asks very pointedly for an explanation of the SFO decision, given Britain's commitments under that 1999 convention.

The convention stipulates that corruption cases should only be dropped for narrowly defined self-defence or where there is no chance of a successful prosecution. Foreign policy considerations, contracts or jobs are not permitted as excuses. Yet these were exactly the explanations given by the Dear Leader and his pet legal advisor. Goldsmith initially justified the SFO decision following his intervention "in terms of both national security and our highest priority foreign policy objectives in the Middle East" – code for keeping the corrupt Saudi despots sweet and continuing to receive their intelligence on Al-Qaeda when it suits. But the next day Blair gave the game away by talking of the Eurofighter jobs that had been saved.

Unfortunately for both, Article 5 of the anti-bribery convention states that national economic considerations and the impact on relations with other countries are no justification for not pursuing corrupt overseas officials – such as the Saudi royals who feasted on the £40bn Al-Yamamah contract and will do so again with the Eurofighter. Otherwise there would never be any corruption cases. Which come to think of it may be why Britain has yet to pass a specific law making corruption overseas a criminal offence, and has failed to bring a single prosecution since incorporating the OECD convention into UK law in 2001. The United States, by contrast, has launched more than 50 foreign corruption cases since 1999.

The problem for Goldsmith's officials will be that the justification given – "my judgement was it would not succeed … a case that is going to come to nothing" – was flatly contradicted by Wardle, who told the *Financial Times*: "There is no guarantee that charges will be brought until you've completed an investigation, so I had perhaps a different view." That's hardly surprising as the investigation had more than a year to run, plus there were the possible secrets of the Saudi Swiss bank accounts yet to come and several BAE insiders were already in the frame on potential false accounting or money laundering charges. All this without the unlikely prospect of a single Saudi defendant being made available – a prime Goldsmith reason for the case being dropped. Plus false accounting and money laundering are not statute-barred, unlike overseas corruption offences before the 2001 Act – another key plank in the Goldsmith argument.

No doubt attempts will be made in private to gloss over these obvious cracks. The OECD may bark, but the Labour caravan will move on amid platitudes about how corruption is treated very seriously – so long as it does not involve our friends or important contracts. And in any event there is little the OECD can do. Blair and Goldsmith have sold out. The SFO has caved in (although they continue to pursue other corrupt payments in South Africa, Tanzania and Romania; where these investigations go remains to be seen, no doubt a politically expendable crumb may be found to justify the expense). BAE will continue to pay commissions to the bagmen who pass on the bribes to those who give the contracts. And the Saudi royals will continue to feed their Swiss accounts. The arms business, in other words, as usual.

TONY'S CARBON EMISSIONS

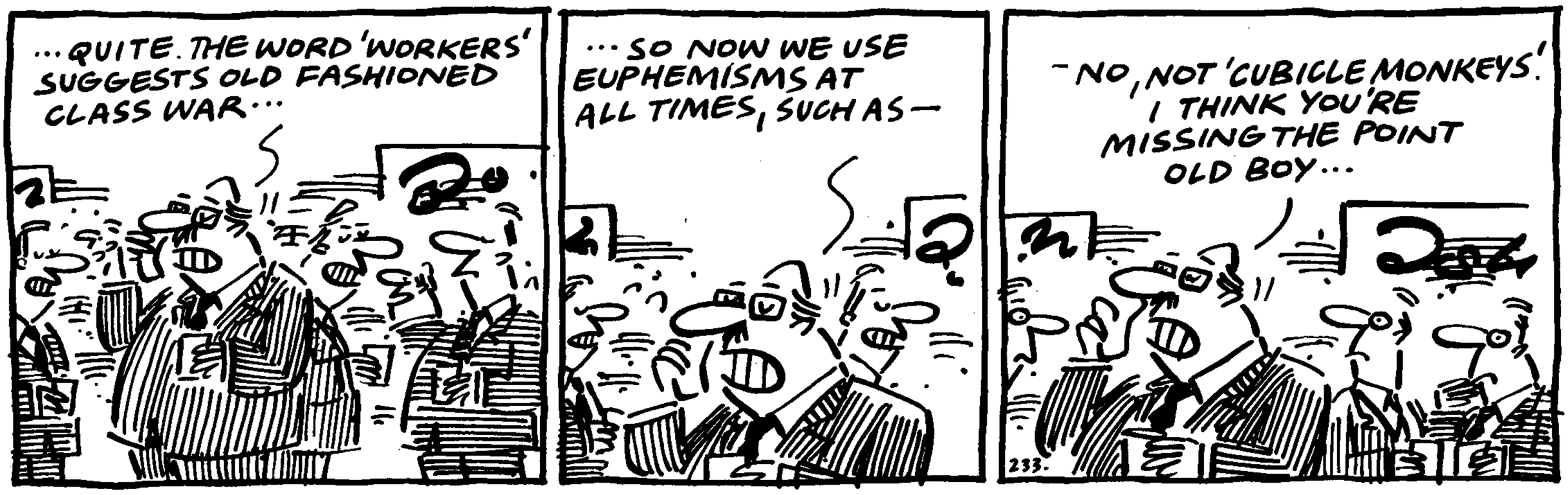
IT SEEMS the phony pharaoh Mohamed Fayed did not after all pay himself and his family the £72m dividend eagerly reported by the *Financial Times* and others in November. That was the dividend declared by Harrods, some of whose numbers were made available before they could be accessed at Companies House. But the delayed accounts for Harrods Holdings, the parent company of the Knightsbridge store, reveal that the dividend paid to the Fayeds was in fact a mere £52.5m – still ahead of the £39m paid for 2005.

The Holdings accounts were rejected by Companies House for unknown reasons when they were first presented along with those for Harrods on 29 November. They were resubmitted on 12 December.

The store paid up to its immediate parent company, Harrods (UK), a dividend of £17m, followed after the January year end and before the accounts were signed off in July by a further dividend of £55m, totalling that £72m. Similar twin payments were made to Holdings by UK financed largely by its sale of the Kurt Geiger shoe business for £46m in July. Despite receiving £17m from UK, Holdings had only paid out £5m prior to the Geiger sale. Afterwards it passed on a further £47.5m via offshore companies ultimately to the Bermuda partnership through which the

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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-NO, NOT 'CUBICLE MONKEYS'. I THINK YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT OLD BOY…
233.

See over ☞

Fayed family own Holdings/Harrods.

There was a similar decision in 2005 when UK paid up £51m and Holdings paid out £39m. But then Holdings at January 2006 had a £129m pension deficit and £352m in bank debt. Its main bankers, Royal Bank of Scotland, last month registered a new mortgage charge.

But Fayed did not go short. The Holdings accounts suggest that he was paid a salary of £5m. This is the first time in recent years at least that Fayed has taken such a large salary. And because he was paid as a director that salary would almost certainly have been PAYE taxed, mostly at 40 percent.

Fayed told none other than Michael Winner last year that he had resolved the tax dispute which saw him go non-resident in 2003 and move to Switzerland after the Revenue cancelled a disadvantageous deal under which he paid a flat sum in tax each year. Fayed lost an appeal against that decision in 2002. A spokesman confirmed in December 2005 that Fayed was once again "resident in the UK".

So the fact that Fayed paid himself such a large and taxable salary in the year to January 2006 indicates that the pharaoh could now have the status of a non-domiciled resident who just pays tax on his income received in the UK. Not unlike that of that other great retailer Sir Philip Green, who pays UK tax on his Arcadia salary but flies to Monaco at weekends to join his wife and her non-domicile/resident Arcadia dividends. A status that will make much easier micro-managing Harrods without that 90-day stay restriction faced by non-residents.

The Holdings accounts also reveal that a £950,000 payout to a former director was inadvertently left out of the 2005 accounts. The 2006 accounts show a £350,000 payment to yet another ex-director. Strangely, the Harrods accounts say a £1m payment to a former director was overlooked in 2005 – so was it one or two golden goodbyes?

Fayed certainly needs those dividends given the continuing drain represented by his Premiership club Fulham. Not only has more than £100m been poured in from a Fayed company in the British Virgin islands, but Harrods (UK) picked up some £32m of the salary tab at the club. Last year the Fulham debt to UK reached a peak of £40m and was still £23m in July before the start of the new season.

Fulham's finances have been boosted by this month's sale of Luis Boa Morte to West Ham for a reputed £5m. Less publicised is that last month the club raised money from a new lender, the Belgo-Dutch Fortis Bank, on the security of its TV rights income.

'Slicker'

BLACKWATCH PT. 94

IN THE new issue of *Vanity Fair*, former *Telegraph* executives pin the blame for Conrad Black's downfall on his minxish wife, Barbara Amiel.

"She led him astray," complains Charles Moore, while Jeremy Deedes calls her "a distraction... Barbara is a five-star girl and she needs five-star maintenance". The implication is that Black himself was little more than an innocent victim, exiled from Eden after letting this latter-day Eve lure him into temptation.

All of which must gladden the heart of one *Vanity Fair* contributing editor, Vicky Ward. She is married to Black's nephew Matthew Doull, who was hired by his uncle to run Hollinger Digital. The exhaustive official report on the Hollinger shenanigans, published in September 2004, found that Black's Hollinger International lost about $68m on its $203m investment in this digital subsidiary – yet Doull collected a "bonus" of $4m.

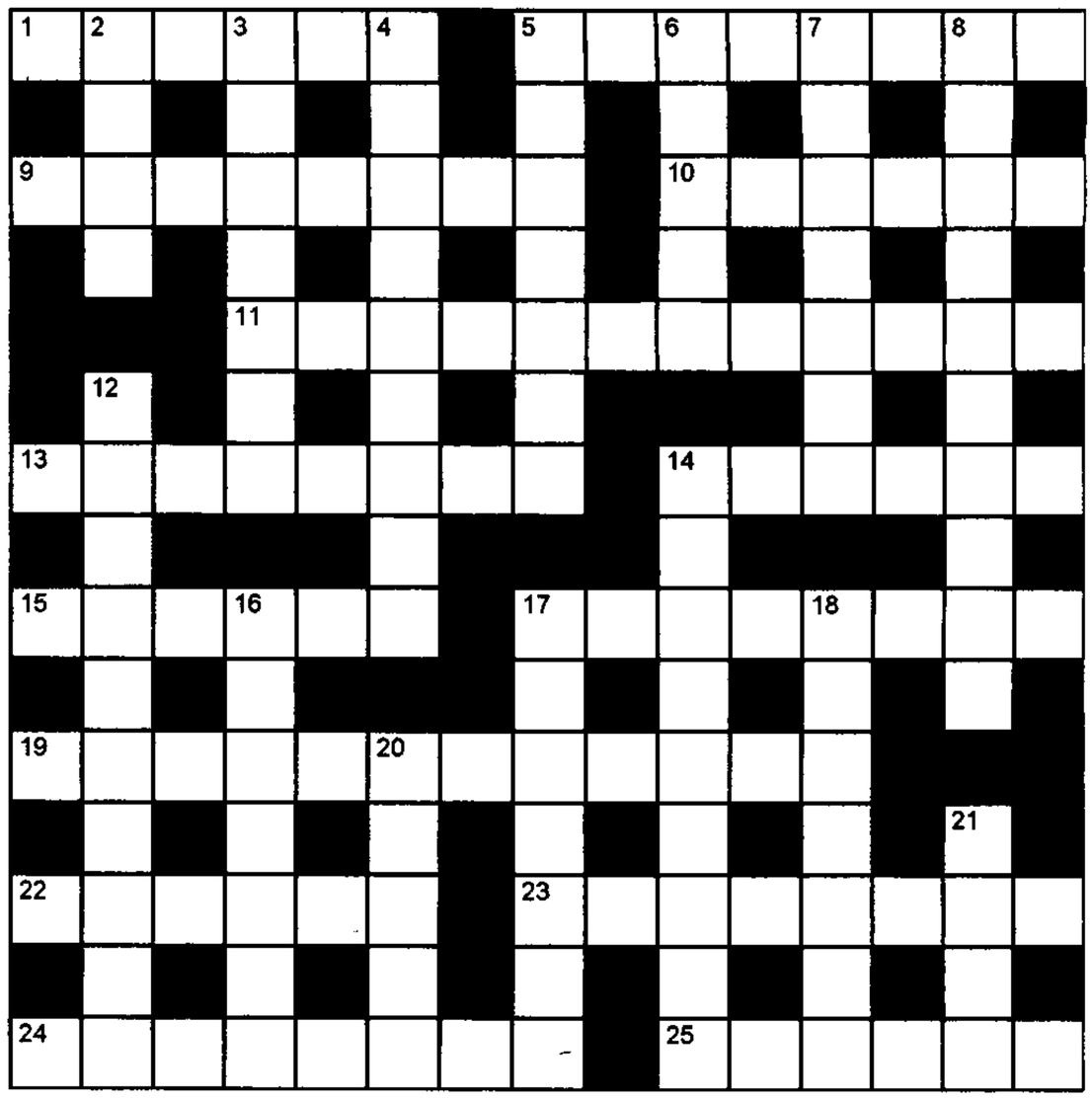
In a previous incarnation, as a business reporter on the *Daily Telegraph*, Doull once had to fill in a personal assessment form. Asked what he saw as the main quality he brought to the job, Doull replied: "My uncle."

EYE CROSSWORD 331

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 26 January 2006

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Non-PC women – they get fewer rides than 'A' types? (6)
5 End of cock sawn off – Dicky gets someone to come (5,3)
9 Witchcraft makes you want to penetrate Simpson? (5,3)
10 "Tacky vaginal entrance gets Virginia off," tabloid recoiled (6)
11 Rubbish hoarders, IMHO, making piles (12)
13 Like a fat cat, Grade's back – poked around Head of Programming (4-4)
14 "Lost bet about Telegraph leader initially" admits, at heart, Max Hastings? (6)
15 Produced hash, being pissed? (6)
17 Going without Cameron's debut is provocative (8)
19 "Yeltsin" Prescott's appearing? Another embarrassment to his party? (5,7)
22 Problem to include deposit for hawker's material (6)
23 "I'm Carling, no good, screwed up and scandalous" (8)
24 The start of Ruth Kelly's involvement with DJ shows good side to character? (2,6)
25 The standard in women's ignorance! (6)

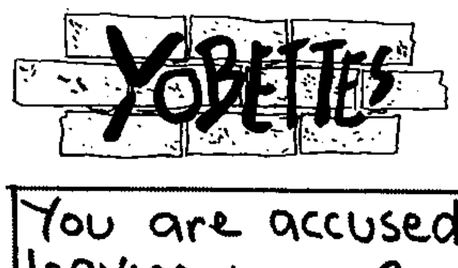
DOWN

2 A stiff length marked as Brenda's dominion? (4)
3 House gets caught in local cock-up – hard stuff to swallow (7)
4 Worker in luvvie environment needs lap to paw (5,4)
5 Revolting peasant with rather common transport up North almost for capital-dwellers? (7)
6 I don't believe that New Woman's joining Blair at last! (5)
7 Do as Blair did regarding socialist principles and flipping tell us nothing? (4,3)
8 Cheating wife abroad, on mat getting end away (ten variations) (10)
12 Super corrupt? (4,6)
14 Lapse of Labour's leader welcomed by arse politely (9)
16 Penny might come first while being penetrated by good bloke (7)
17 With a last from Pinochet, Chile's buggered proper! (7)
18 Works infiltrated by Poles – they'll have to be removed if too red (7)
20 Lucky like a tart? (5)
21 Hit Roger (4)

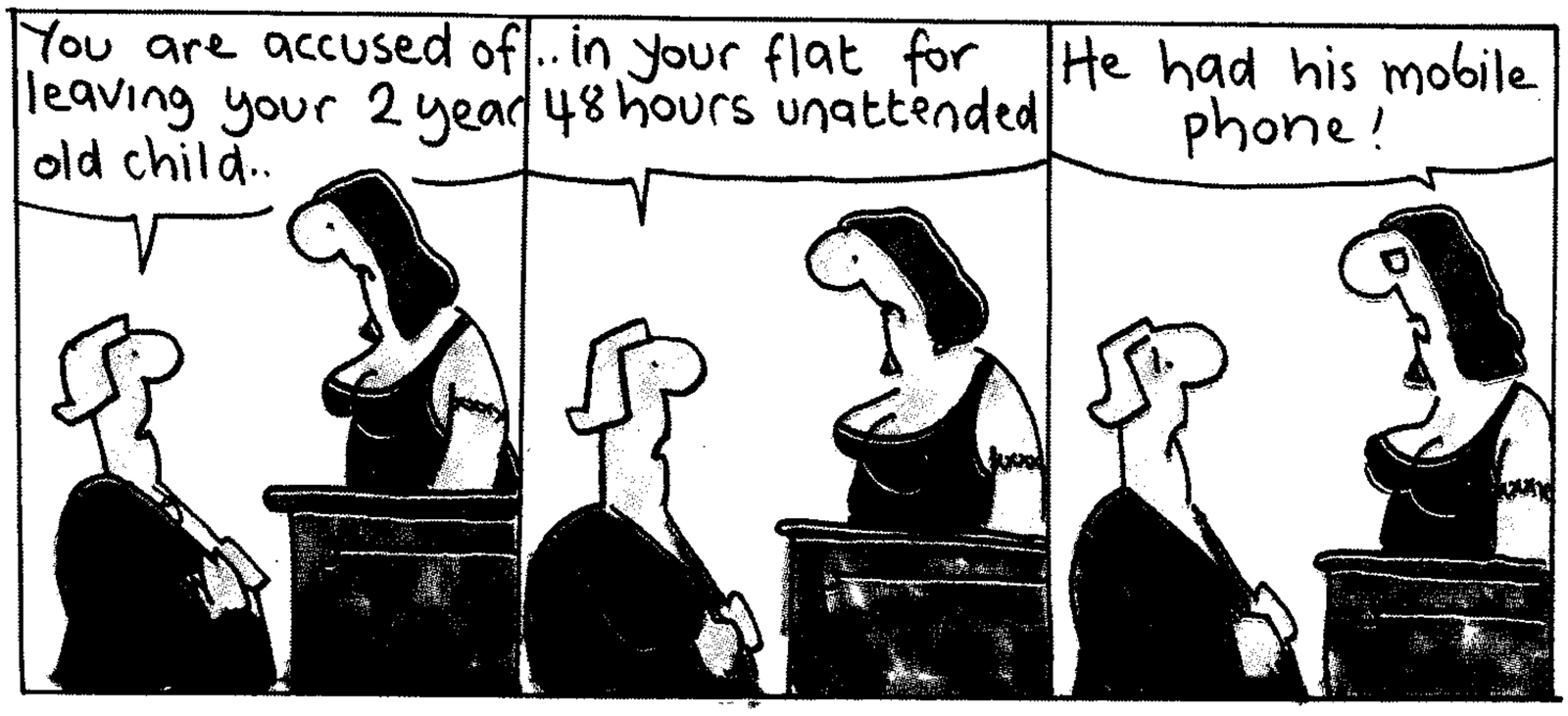
Crossword 330 winner: VERNON ROPER

ACROSS: 1 Wannabe 5 Addenda 9 Re-election 11 Oust 12 Thanks 13 Camp it up 14/7 Tired and emotional 16 Nuts 18 Prat 20 Circular 23 Opulence 24 Effete 26 Also 27 Anticlimax 28 Perfidy 29 Spirits.

DOWN: 2 Apeshit 3 Nylon 4 Backside 6 Denims 8 Disgust 10 Incontinent 15 Rattle off 17 Screw cap 19 Repulse 21 Retract 22 On hand 25 Friar.



HUSBAND



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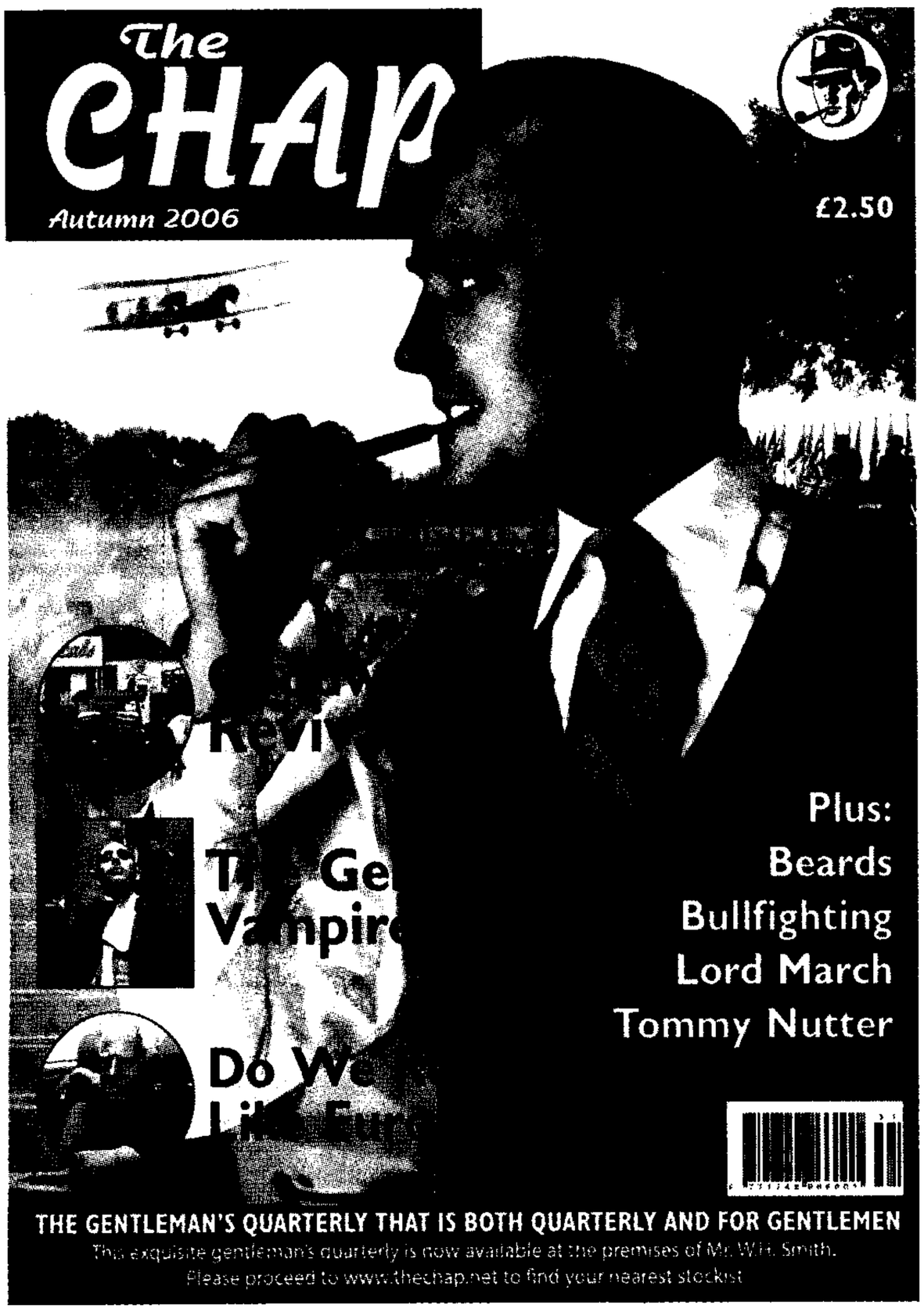
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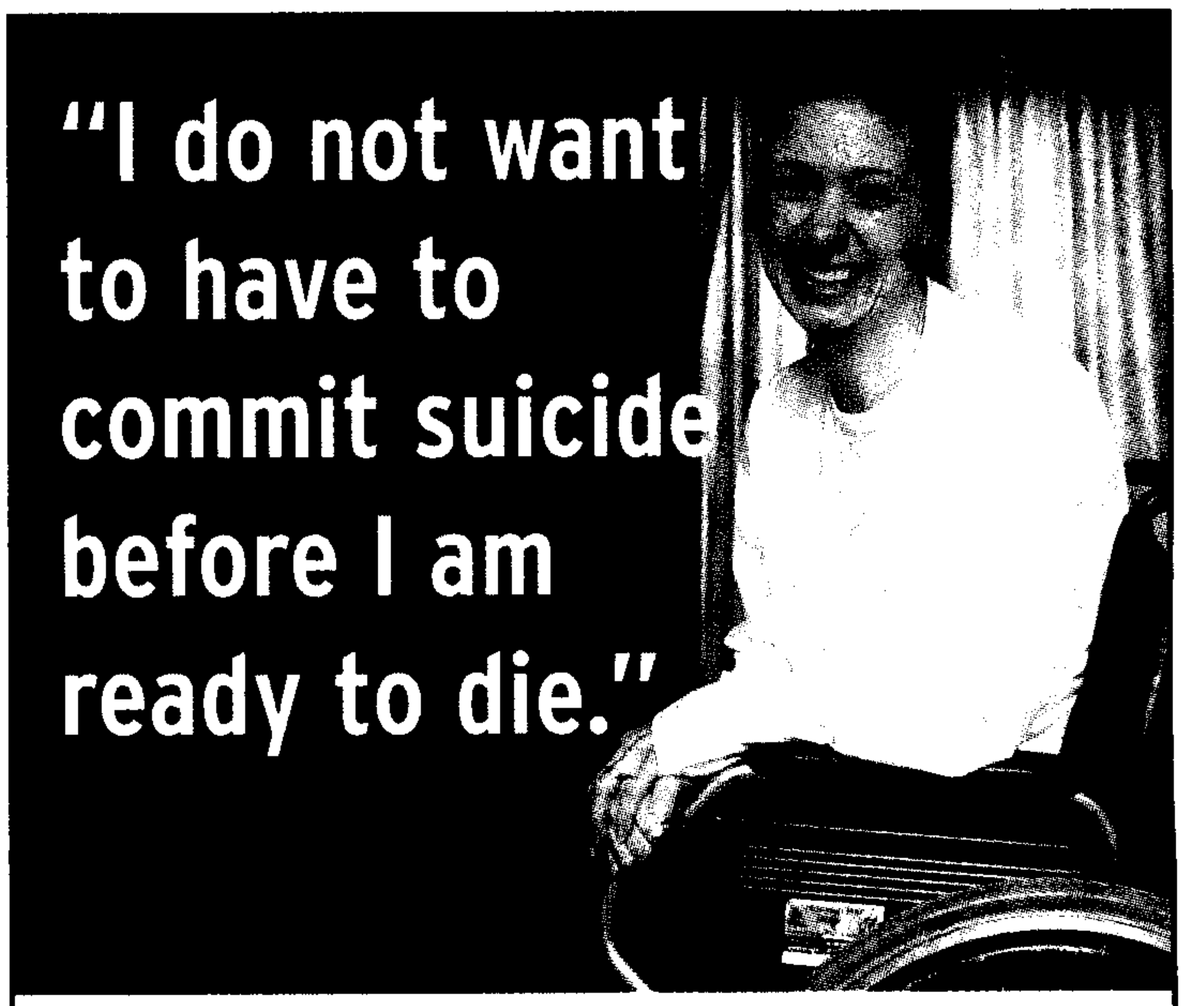

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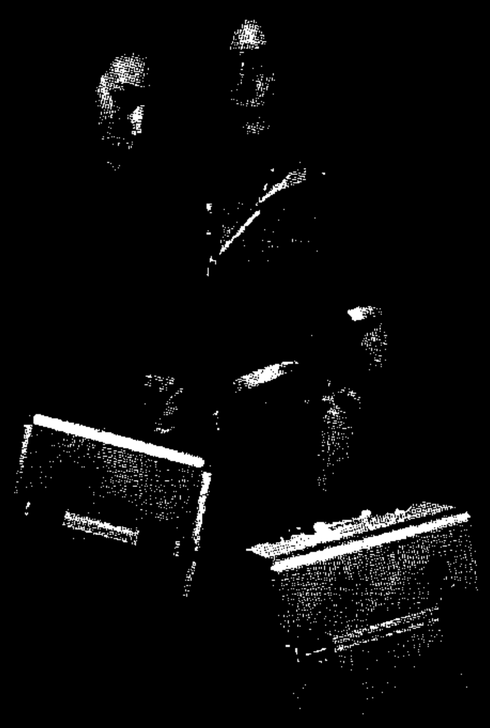

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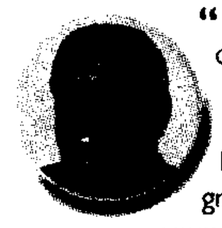

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DESPERATELY SEEKING kind person who can contribute to the £6000 cost of crucial rhinoplasty, so this talented musician can stop hiding from photographs and come out of the shadows. Email: catri_anna@hotmail.com to hear the music. S/C: 40-61-99. A/C: 15716591.

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MISS THE WEST WING? Intelligent, unsigned screenwriter creating best thing since, but shackled to day job. Please help! S/C: 11-18-11. A/C: 12801601.

ENVIRONMENTAL ARTIST, getting commissions, but need support / guidance to clear debt. artoutdoors@hotmail.co.uk Images available

CONTRIBUTIONS WILL HELP raise spirits of wilting family. Thank you. S/C: 60-07-01. A/C: 40405613.

FUNDING REQUIRED for TV / radio pilot comedy sketch show: onemankebabbed@yahoo.co.uk

SINGLE MOTHER OF TODDLER. Poor health, needs help. £2,600 debt. S/C: 30-97-81. A/C: 10342868. Thank you.

GOOD GUY, BAD LUCK, desperately need your help. Halifax, S/C: 11-03-57. A/C: 01102260.

'BIG MICE' and no hot water: Anything appreciated! S/C: 09-01-26. A/C: 09635026.

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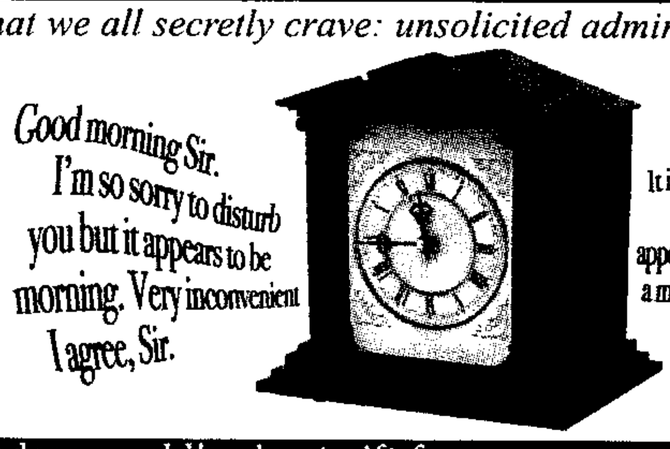
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Urgent Appeal for the Palestinian people

MAP
MEDICAL AID FOR **PALESTINIANS**

"The de facto sanctions regime imposed upon the Gaza Strip has caused unprecedented suffering as people are denied access to adequate food, water and medicine. Living under what is tantamount to a siege with frequent military incursions, and denied the basic human rights to health and self-determination, Palestinians face a humanitarian crisis."

Darrin Waller. Chief Executive, *Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP).*

In the last 12 months, the people of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have suffered frequent military incursions and terrible economic deprivation. At the same time people have been denied freedom of movement to an unprecedented degree. Today the Palestinian people do not enjoy even the most basic of human rights – the right to health.

allow doctors to properly treat their injured patients.

After nearly 40 years of military occupation, the suffering of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza became increasingly critical in January 2006 with the decision, following the democratic election of a new government lead by Hamas, of the US and EU to withdraw all financial support from the Palestinian Authority (PA). Simultaneously, the Israeli government withheld customs duties owed to the PA, which now total well over $600 million. Tens of thousands of government employees have not been paid for up to twelve months.

Food, fuel and medical supplies have been reduced to a trickle, as Gaza's only commercial border crossing remains closed most of the time, which means essential supplies have not been getting in while agricultural produce – on which Gaza's economy depends – has been left to rot on the roadsides. Gaza's economy is paralysed and people are living in a state of de facto siege.

An already perilous situation became increasingly critical after large-scale military incursions began last June. Over 660 Palestinians (including 141 children) have died as a result. Israel's policy of extra-judicial executions has led to over 50 people being killed; of whom 18 were civilian bystanders.

MAP urgently needs your support so that we can continue to provide people with life-saving medical aid and the longer-term support that can lead to lasting improvements in the Palestinian health care and public health systems.

The costs below will give you an idea of how your donation can help:

£45 could help provide much needed items like bandages, surgical gloves and cotton wool to allow doctors to properly treat their wounded and injured patients

£80 could provide food to families in Gaza left destitute after months of de facto siege

£200 could help provide communities with access to clean water.

After a year of unprecedented tragedy for the Palestinian people, your donation can help to provide sick, injured and vulnerable people with life-saving food and medicines today – and also support projects that will safeguard their health and medical needs in the future. **Thank you**

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3-year-old Asil Mahfouz Wahdan outside her family home in Beit Hanoun, Gaza. Asil's family rely on food parcels from MAP because, like many in Gaza, they have been hard hit by spiralling unemployment and rising food prices and have no reliable income.

Donate now: call 0207 226 4114 or visit www.map-uk.org

Right now water, food and medical supplies are desperately needed. In the longer term MAP also needs your support to maintain our projects which help to provide for the future health and medical needs of the Palestinian people – such as providing access to water, supporting children traumatised by conflict, and caring for people with disabilities.

Anything you can give will help sick, injured and vulnerable people. For instance, your gift of **£45 could help provide much needed basic items like bandages, surgical gloves and cotton wool to**

I will help MAP to provide short and long-term support to the Palestinian people

Please fill in this form, place in an envelope and return your completed form postage free to: Medical Aid for Palestinians, 33a Islington Park Street, FREEPOST ND6445, London N1 1BR. Or call 020 7226 4114 during office hours. Thank you.

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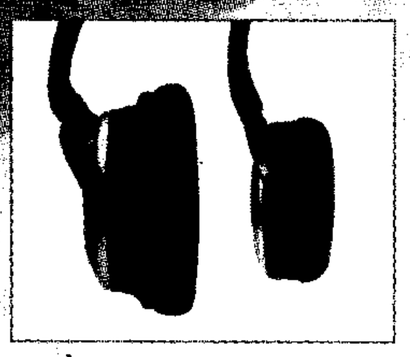

QC2 headphones (left). New QC3 headphones (right).

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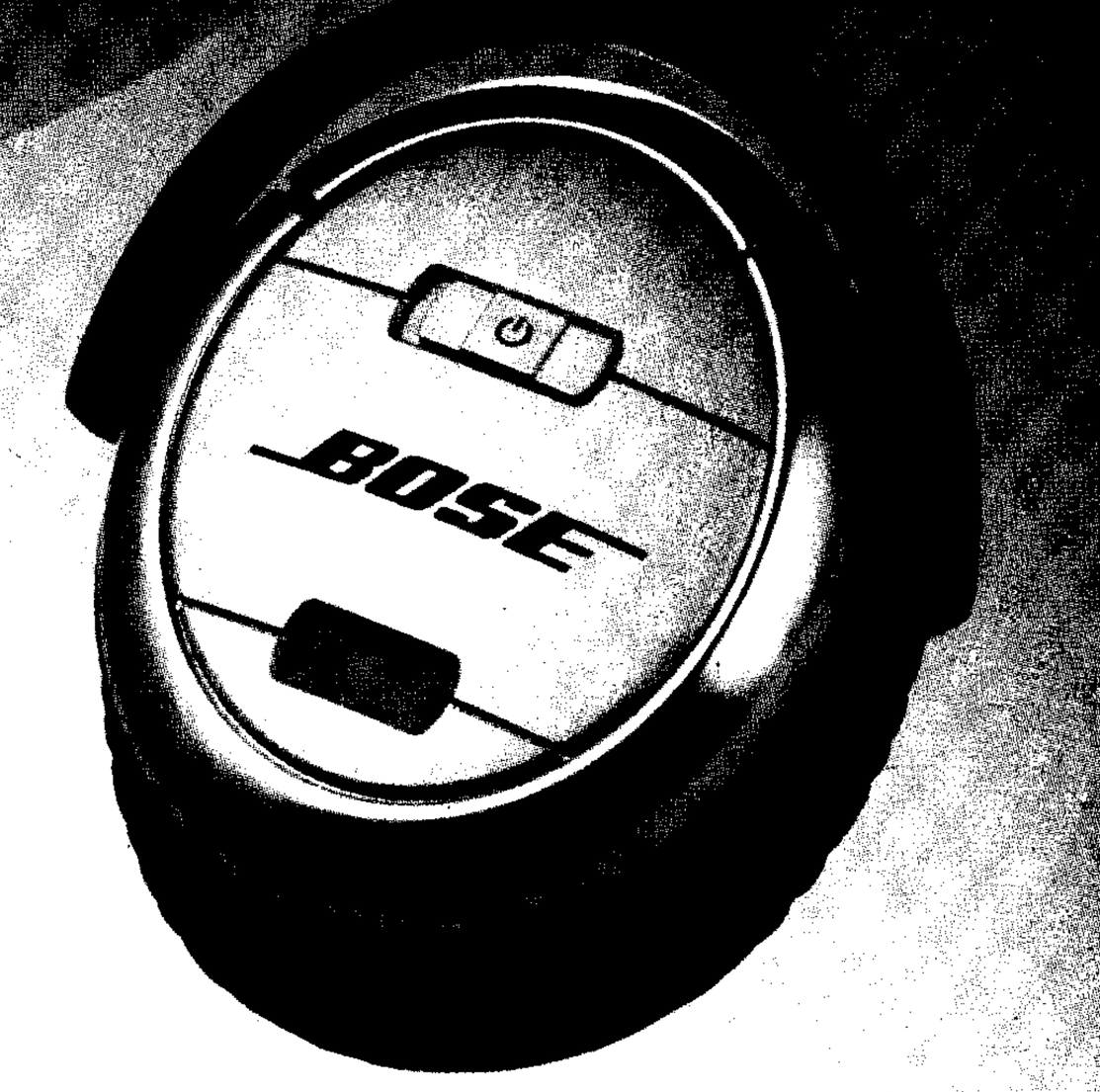

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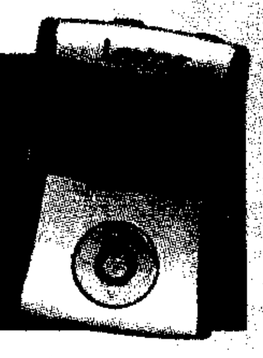

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